

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Thomas P. Gill

Thomas P. Gill was born April 21, 1922 in Honolulu. He was educated at Roosevelt High School, the University of Hawai'i and the University of California, where he received his law degree in 1951.

He served in the Hawai'i Territorial Guard from 1941 to 1942, and in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1945.

Gill entered private practice in 1951 and became active in the Democratic party. He was chairman of the O'ahu Democratic County Committee from 1954 to 1958, chairman of the O'ahu County Campaign in 1952 and 1954, and delegate to the National Democratic Convention in 1960 and 1964.

Gill was elected to the territorial house in 1959, and continued serving in the state house until 1962. He then served a term in the U.S. House. From 1966 to 1970, he was the lieutenant governor of Hawai'i during the John Burns administration.

Tape Nos. 17-14a-1-88 and 17-14b-1-88

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Thomas P. Gill (TG)

May 5, 1988

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Chris Conybeare (CC) and Daniel W. Tuttle, Jr. (DT)

Joy Chong: The following is an interview with Tom Gill, which took place on May 5, 1988, and the interviewers were Chris Conybeare and Dan Tuttle, and the interview took place at the KHET studio.

DT: It's May 5th. We're doing another one of our installments of oral histories with people involved in Hawai'i politics. Today, we're talking to Mr. Tom Gill. And Tom, I'm going to start with the way I've started every other interview, and if you could describe a little bit about your early circumstances, when you were born and where, and what were your parents doing at that time?

TG: Well, born in 1922 [April 21], which was somewhere in the last century, wasn't it? (DT chuckles.) My father [Thomas Gill] was an architect who came in [18]98, and my mother [Lorin (Tarr) Gill] came some years later.

CC: And how about school? Where did you start your school career here?

TG: Well, it started with the Calvert course at home for a couple of years. That's why I never could spell. And went to Lincoln [Elementary School] and Roosevelt [High School], University [of Hawai'i] for a year and a half, and then (in 1941) somebody threw a bomb around here and we had to go off to war or something. (Chuckles)

DT: So you were educated partially at home, is that right? That sounds like your mother, because I got to know her pretty well, you know. She was quite a gal in her own right, wasn't she?

TG: Yeah, she used to work for (both) the newspapers. Of course, during the [19]30s, she worked for the [*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*], which paid practically nothing, or next to nothing. And I guess while she was teaching me, she was also a freelance writer, so it was one way to stay home, work and carry out the education at the same time.

DT: How long did you do that? For a year or two or . . .

TG: Oh, first two-and-a-half years.

DT: First two-and-a-half years.

TG: Started in the third grade.

DT: Started in the third grade at Lincoln, then?

TG: Mm hmm [yes].

DT: Is this the old Lincoln School down by Thomas Square?

TG: What they now call Linekona.

DT: Linekona.

TG: And I think it's been taken over by the art academy [Honolulu Academy of Arts], hasn't it?

DT: That's strange. You went to grammar school there, and that's where you were elected [O'ahu Democratic] County [Committee] Chairman [in 1954], right?

TG: Bad things all happen in the same place, right?

(Laughter)

DT: Your father was a pretty well-known architect. Didn't he design quite a few of the buildings around Hawai'i?

TG: Yeah, he was one of the earlier ones and, unfortunately or fortunately, I don't know which, most of them have been torn down by now, but he re-built part of Chinatown after the fire, which occurred in around 1900. And a lot of the old homes, some of them are still standing up in Nu'uano and Mānoa.

DT: Were you active in politics even in grammar school? It strikes me, with a mother such as you had, she is very much involved in public affairs, interested in public affairs. At least she was during the years that I knew her. And she must have gotten you involved, so were you talking politics even in grammar school?

TG: Oh, not too much, except when [Franklin D.] Roosevelt got elected, why, he was sort of a family favorite. He grew up across the (Hudson) River from my father, and there was some kind of a familial connection, I suppose.

CC: Were they Democrats, your family?

TG: Oh, I don't know what you would call them, sort of iconoclasts. Strange.

(Laughter)

DT: No, they were probably Democrats, at least from the New Deal days on, forward . . .

TG: As I was saying, from that time, but . . .

- DT: But my guesstimate would be, I'd never got to know your father, but your mother would probably be one who might be an admirer of Woodrow Wilson, even.
- TG: Yeah. We used to talk about him.
- DT: So, you did get pretty well involved, even in grammar school probably, at least you knew what was happening in the world, and a lot of it was revolving, of course, about the so-called New Deal of that time.
- TG: Well, it was a great advantage to be brought up at that time because you could learn things by reading it, you didn't have any television (and only a limited amount of radio, if you could afford a receiver).
- DT: So you did a lot of reading, I bet?
- TG: (Chuckles) Sure.
- DT: And that was encouraged by your mother, no doubt.
- TG: Well, if you live up on the mountain, you're not running around the streets. We lived up on (the top of) Round Top, (or Tantalus as it was usually called).
- DT: You grew up there, mm hmm.
- TG: Ever since I was four, I guess, so you find ways to occupy your time which are not, perhaps, in public parks (or on the streets).
- DT: So what about—you went on to high school then, to Roosevelt, which was one of your better high schools at the time, wasn't it?
- TG: Yeah, and I guess it still is fairly good, better than most people give it credit for. But it was seven through twelve [grades] at that stage, there was no intermediate school, so we were there all of that time. In fact, it had just been built, I think, under one of the New Deal programs.
- DT: So it was a brand-new school then.
- TG: It was quite new. [Roosevelt High School opened in 1930.]
- DT: And it immediately became what was an English standard school, is that right?
- TG: It was part of the English standard system, as was Lincoln [Elementary School] and several other schools on the island. (This system) has received a lot of criticism in years past, (and has been dropped). I am sort of amused by (this) because we're now going back to something rather similar. It's (now) called "magnet schools" which is—stick around long enough, you'll see everything twice. (Chuckles)
- DT: Things do revolve and (chuckles) come back to where they once were, don't they?



CC: I understand that in high school even, you became interested in school politics, were you?

TG: Oh, I was student body president one year and secretary another year, whatever that means.

DT: But you'd at least cast your hat in those rings, and get involved in . . .

TG: Oh, yeah. We had fairly activist student government. This was what, '39, '40. We started an intramural league, take care of the guys who weren't big enough to play (high school) football, and (did) some other interesting things.

DT: Those were the years when there was a lot of discussion about sort of pro-England, the Roosevelt interest in England and the free world against the Nazis. Was there much discussion in Hawai'i at the time about this?

TG: Oh yeah.

DT: Or whether we should get into the war or not?

TG: That was very well covered, at least in my social studies classes. We had Sarah Matthews who was retired many years ago and is long gone by now, but she had an interesting background and she was very much into the European situation, of course, being strongly anti-Nazi, and so we got chapter and verse in everything that went on. Of course, it was in the paper anyway.

DT: Was Ethel Spaulding teaching at that time, or was that before she went to Roosevelt? You remember Ethel Spaulding?

TG: I remember her. I don't think she was there at that time. I don't know for sure.

DT: She was very much interested in getting people involved in current events and so forth. Although she had a very profound bias herself, which was, I guess, we would label as right wing today.

TG: Well, Roosevelt was an interesting problem at that stage because, (these) being a Republican regime in the Islands at that time. I remember having to make a commencement speech in which we mentioned Roosevelt High School, and the principal insisted that it would be stated that, clearly, it was Theodore Roosevelt High School, not Franklin. I thought that was sort of funny.

DT: Well, I guess technically, it was named after Teddy Roosevelt, wasn't it, so you'd have to say Roosevelt High.

(Laughter)

TG: But Franklin built (most of) it.

(Laughter)

DT: Whatever Tom Gill says, notwithstanding.

- CC: You say you had an interest and understanding from reading of some world politics and things, but were you aware of the nature of Hawai'i society back then?
- TG: Oh sure.
- CC: Did you talk about that at home, too?
- TG: Oh, yeah. Sure. It was perfectly obvious, you'd walk around and see it. And I suppose I had the advantage of parents who were not connected with the Big Five in any way, shape or form, except as independent professionals. And so they were somewhat, not anti, but certainly critical of all the dumb things they used to do, and we'd hear about it, including (what was printed in) the newspapers.
- DT: Now, but most people [at] that time was sort of accommodating, weren't they? I mean, they went along with the establishment politics. Your folks were built a little bit differently, right?
- TG: Oh, yeah, sure. And you know, it got (us) various problems. I remember once, I almost won the [*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*] oratorical contest, but I was knocked down to second because Riley Allen [Riley H. Allen, editor of the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*] was one of the judges, and I made some remarks about the plantation society and (mentioned) that it probably wasn't the greatest system that had ever been invented and we ought to do something about it. And my mother read the speech, (and told me), "You're not going to win with that."
- I said, "Oh, it's okay." (But of course), she was right.
- DT: You didn't win, huh? (TG laughs.) You know, I know there were periods when some of the *Star-Bulletin* leaders were quite worried about Tom Gill, this is after the [World] War [II], of course, that you were really, had communist ties or something in terms of a social attitude.
- TG: The interesting thing is, if you talk to the guys who now will admit they had communist ties, they hated my guts because I thought they were stupid. But that's neither here nor there. (In the 1950s, the Republican establishment tended to label the opposition as Communist.)
- DT: How could your father survive as an architect in town, though, given the world of that day, and without getting government contracts because they would go to the people who were strong in politics.
- TG: Well, it was very difficult. In fact, of course, the [Great] Depression wiped out (most) architects, the building industry and everything else, so that became a moot question, (and) I don't know the details. I remember hearing him say once that he'd been invited down to city hall because they had some city work to be done and invited him to make a proposal. And then I think it was the mayor, whoever it was at that time [George F. Wright], who was sort of a friend of his, said, "Of course, you understand that there'll have to be some of the fee paid over here or there or something of a sort as a"—I don't think they called it a kickback in those days, but . . .
- DT: Essentially what it was.
- TG: So he told (the mayor) to take the contract and stick it, and walked out, so he didn't get that

job, I'm sure.

DT: So they managed to survive in spite of that type of atmosphere, then?

TG: On Riley Allen's thirty-four dollars a week, yeah.

DT: In other words, your mother was probably making more money than your father was as an architect?

TG: Oh, she was actually making the money in the early [19]30s.

DT: Oh, really. Uh huh. But the Great Depression didn't hurt Hawai'i as much as it did in some areas, did it, so you weren't in danger of starving here, were you?

TG: Well, we ran pretty close to the edge. Pair of track shoes (was) too expensive, I recall that, but (we) made it through the thirties with a little help from some relatives on the Mainland who (died and) left some money (to my mother), but it was a difficult time.

DT: After Roosevelt High School days [graduated in 1940], you went to UH [University of Hawai'i] for a little while, did you?

TG: Yeah, (until) December '41, they closed the place down, I think, for a few weeks then.

CC: Did you---I see from your bio [biography] that you were in the Hawai'i Territorial Guard. Did you go and volunteer right at the word go? Or what happened? Were you in ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]?

TG: Yeah, they took the University [of Hawai'i] ROTC, which just shows how far down the road they were, and converted them into a unit which was somewhat less than completely war-ready, I should think. In fact (the students) were having a hell of a time trying to figure out how to put firing pins into an 03 [rifle]. Nobody (had) really done it, you see, they just use them for drill. To put that pin in there is quite a little job. I think it took them half a day to figure that out. After that, they didn't find any ammunition, fortunately, 'cause they'd (probably) have shot each other to death. But it became a unit of some, I guess, some interest (or importance) for about six months. Then after the Battle of Midway (in mid-1942), it was of no particular value.

CC: In fact, it first, in its inception, it included nisei ROTC members, right?

TG: Oh yeah. They took in everybody who was in the ROTC which, of course, included a lot of my classmates who were nisei. And then about a month or so into the operation [January 21, 1942], why, they stripped them of their guns, which was a sad thing. But, I suppose you can explain it, you can't excuse it.

CC: Many of them went on to be in the 442nd [Regimental Combat Team].

TG: Oh, yeah. (First) came the VVV, which was the Varsity Victory Volunteers. I think, Ted Tsukiyama, who was still functioning around here, was sort of a leader in that.

CC: Right.

TG: And they later went into the 442nd.

DT: Yeah, Sakae Takahashi was involved, wasn't he, with . . .

TG: Yeah. He was an officer in the (University of Hawai'i) ROTC, as I recall, he was a couple of grades ahead of me.

CC: Did you know him in those days?

TG: Generally, yeah.

CC: Not as well as you would later?

TG: No, no, of course, he must have been a senior, I think, or junior at that time.

DT: You know, most people recall very vividly what they were doing on December 7, [1941] so you have a story about that? Or two, or three?

(Laughter)

TG: Not particularly. I was home (that Sunday morning) and couldn't understand what all the noise was about.

DT: You had a pretty good view from your valley, . . .

TG: Well, you go up on the ridge and you could see, and it became perfectly obvious that some of the planes flying around didn't have American insignias on them, and there was lot of smoke coming out of Pearl Harbor, so I went down and got ready.

DT: You got called to duty then or . . .

TG: No, (I) just went down (to join) some kind of (medical) unit (where some of us had) been training (in) first aid (at Queen's Hospital). I went down to check in. Then after that, they (called) everybody (in the university ROTC) into the [Hawai'i Territorial] Guard.

DT: Where was this you went to at the time?

TG: Where was it? Oh, I think it was up here at the university. (Later our unit was stationed next to 'Iolani Palace).

DT: Oh, university. Mobilized the university. Thereafter, you were pretty well occupied for the next three years, weren't you? Three or four?

TG: Well, what do you call it? Hurry up and wait? But a fair amount of occupation, yeah.

DT: Yeah, somehow it's difficult to visualize Tom Gill, as he developed later in life as a politician of sorts, ever being able to adjust to the military. How, under the sun, did you do it? Because

there, you have to take orders, you have to follow its totalitarian society. This must have been really tough on you.

TG: No, (early in the war the military was a bit) disorganized, (so) it (didn't) make that much difference. Oh, (it was) a little bit sticky to start with, but no big thing. I joined up with the 24th Infantry [Division] (in the fall of 1942) which was then stationed out on the North Shore. We stayed there for nine months or so, and then went to Australia, New Guinea (and the Philippines). But those were all regular army folks, which at that era meant (that) many of them (had) volunteered during the depression because it was the only job they could find. And it was a very interesting cross section. You had people from every state [of the] union, which normally, down here, you wouldn't meet too close up anyway. It was a good, very interesting mix. We learned all about Mainland tensions that you don't pick up in Hawai'i.

DT: So you still found enough latitude in the military to keep yourself at peace with yourself?

TG: Oh, they had a few things going. Early on, they were going to send me to OCS [Officer Candidate School], I guess. I probably was the only one [in] the company that had part of a college education, which was interesting. But then we got down to Sydney, and had a week or so waiting to be sent further north, and I noticed everybody forging passes and taking off to town. Finally, I said, the hell with that, (I) don't forge passes. If they're all going, I'll go too. And then, of course, I get picked up, and that was the end of that, so. I even got busted from PFC to private.

DT: (Chuckles) Oh my goodness.

TG: Later on, of course, they give (the stripes) back when (enough others) get shot, but. It was an interesting experience.

DT: And how long did you spend in New Guinea, in the Philippines?

TG: Well, (early 1944 until) the end of the war.

DT: Till the end of the war, so that was quite a spell, then, wasn't it?

TG: Yeah, we were in the so-called Hollandia Invasion (in April 1944). (Hollandia is) called something else now, under Indonesia, but it's the (settlement) on the border of Papua and what used to be called Dutch New Guinea. (We also made the landing in Leyte in October 1944, and went on to Mindoro) and Mindanao, (where the war ended). But I thought my one bit of revenge on all of this was, after spending the last year as (a) noncommissioned platoon leader 'cause the lieutenants were all gone—they either got eliminated or promoted—and shortly before the war was over—(or) maybe it was just after—they called everybody and asked them to (reenlist). They (even) asked me to take a commission and go with the army (to Japan). I told them, "Well, you had that chance once, (so) forget it, man."

(Laughter)

TG: Who needs it.

DT: But you [were] wounded someplace along the line?

TG: Oh, yeah. A little bit (of mortar shell, near Davao).

DT: Well, we'll pick it up with the post-war period after we've changed tapes.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is videotape number two of the Tom Gill interview.

DT: . . . where were you when the war came to a close. Were you still in the Philippines?

TG: (Yes, we) were down in Mindanao. (The army was), if I recall correctly, sprucing people up. (The troops) were run down from not polishing their shoes for several years! (The army was) getting them ready to go, I think, to Kyushu, [Japan].

DT: Mm hmm. It got saved from that.

TG: That gives you any ambivalent feelings of the atom bomb, doesn't it?

DT: Very much so. I'm just wondering about, I was going to ask about your feelings about that.

TG: Well, I had ambivalent feelings. I suppose, when you get right down to it, (the bomb) saved a few million lives, by destroying a few hundred thousand. There's nothing good about war anyway. Query is that less bad or what. I don't know.

DT: Yeah, I think you, you told volumes, when you said there's nothing good about a war, right.

CC: Well, be that as it may, although we pass over those three or four years of your life which were, you'd like to forget, I'm sure, . . .

TG: Oh, no. They're kind of funny.

DT: Anything else you recall about that period? What was funny about them? I mean, you find humor in war?

TG: What do I mean, jungle rot, dengue fever, malaria . . .

(Laughter)

CC: You seem to find valuable, though, the association with this group of people from all over and kind of a diverse background, you . . .

TG: Yeah, I think it gives you sort of an insight, sort of like a little capsule of depression society. There were guys from the steel mills, people from the farms, guys from down South. (These were) people you just wouldn't run into normally in Hawai'i. And they all had their little twist. In fact, we even had a couple of Cajuns who, when they got annoyed, would speak in Cajun French. After a while, you'd learn most of them (were using) swear words. But the company commander (didn't) understand it, but he was getting told off.

(Laughter)

DT: Did you talk politics much?

TG: Oh, we had a couple of kill-time sessions, I guess. In fact, in Hollandia, waiting for the Philippine operation to start, most of the time, you're sitting around, doing not much of anything, so couple of us set up little classes for the platoon or the company. There was one other guy from the University [of Hawai'i] there by that time. You know, we'd discuss things, (which probably made) the commander nervous, but (we were talking) about what was going on (in the world, and) where (we) were going and so forth.

DT: But you didn't talk much about Hawai'i, I suppose, because it was not, it wasn't a Hawai'i company . . .

TG: Well, most of the (men were from the Mainland, but) it was a company that had been in Hawai'i, stationed at Schofield [Barracks] for many, many years. Our 21st Infantry regiment was one of the old regular army (units).

DT: I see.

TG: In fact, they all wanted to go back, I think, after they saw what the rest of the world looked like.

DT: But then after the war, you were able to get detached fairly rapidly, and then you went on to Berkeley to finish up your college degree, is that right?

TG: Oh, I had enough time in (service)—“points,” they used to call it, to get out (with one of) the first (groups) after the war was over. So, (they shipped) us back to California and let us loose (in the fall of 1945). I spent the next nine months (in Hawai'i and traveling on the Mainland until) the fall semester at Berkeley in 1946.

DT: So you just recuperated from the war for about nine months and then decided . . .

TG: Oh, no. We had some interesting things going on. There was a little bit of quasi-political activity (as well).

DT: Oh, tell us about that.

TG: Oh, there were some new veterans' groups being set up, I think they're (mostly) gone now, but (some may not be). The American Veterans Committee was being organized, which was a new veterans organization right after the war. Mostly it was the guys who didn't fit into the [American] Legion and VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] or whatever, and in fact, they even had a convention, I think, in the summer of (1946) in Des Moines, (Iowa), which I went to.

DT: Oh, you went to the convention in Des Moines, huh?

TG: Yeah, kind of amusing, (as well as hot and sweaty).

DT: Lot of social . . .

TG: Oh yeah. These were the sort of radical types, I guess you'd call them or they didn't fit into



the mold.

DT: They'd talk about national health insurance in those days? This was . . .

TG: Oh, they talked about a lot of things. In fact, one of the fellows who addressed that convention was Jacob Javits, who later became a [U.S.] senator for New York [1987–80]. He was stirring up the dust at that point. And we had a number of meetings down here. In fact, if I recall correctly, it was one of my first contacts with the formal Republican party. We had some people that were interested in whatever the project was, I don't remember, and went down to see Roy [Royal A.] Vitousek, whose son and wife [Roy A., Jr. and Betty Vitousek] are good friends of ours. He was then the guy who ran the Republican party from the room in the Young Hotel, as you may recall. Ran the legislature, too. And we went and talked to him about something or other and it was perfectly obvious that he didn't have time for us. So, you know, okay. It became very clear at that point, you don't have time, okay, we don't have time either. Forget it. And . . .

DT: You weren't tempted to join the Republican party as a result of that encounter, I gather. (Chuckles)

TG: Well, we were just trying to figure out what they were.

CC: You said "we." Were there any other people that you were involved with in the American Veterans Committee that later were involved with you in political life? Were there any . . .

TG: Not too many.

CC: . . . beginnings of any . . .

TG: Not too many. The most active ones were people—couple of guys who had been here in the university before the war, but who were natives of New York. I saw them later back there, but they didn't stay here (in Hawai'i).

DT: So after that hiatus, you ended up in [University of California] Berkeley. How did you happen to go to Berkeley?

TG: Well, it's a good school, I think, and the weather wasn't as bad as it is in the East, and I sort of liked California.

DT: You weren't tempted to return to University of Hawai'i?

TG: No, I think by that time, the need for somewhat broader academic horizons was obvious, and no reason to stay there. In fact, (we) had this munificent GI Bill, over \$300 a month, you could go—no, \$150, I guess it was, you could go almost anywhere.

DT: So you spent three years there?

TG: I got my B.A. [1948], and I went through law school there [1951], too.

DT: You took a longer route—law training, you took a bachelor's degree, you didn't take two



years and then law school?

TG: (I had a year and a half at UH before the war and started) as a junior (at UC) Berkeley—two years there and then three years of law school.

DT: I see.

CC: And did you get interested in labor law in law school or was that later or. . . .

TG: Well, actually, I think it was as good a time as any. Of course, I'd come back to the Islands a couple times in the summer, and that was the time of the [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] dock strike [1949] and a few other things, '47, 8, 9, kind of a seminal period, I guess, in labor relations down here. And I knew some of the folks and some of the unions, and we used to talk about it. Broom Brigade [women's picket of ILWU protesting the dock strike] was busy walking up and down (in front of) Aloha Tower, waving its brooms, and you could sort of see the breakout of (union awareness in the) community. So, (I) took some labor law at Berkeley, among other things.

DT: Had you got acquainted with Art [Arthur A.] Rutledge [head of the Teamsters union] back in those days or did that come later?

TG: Oh, I knew of him, but I didn't know him at all.

CC: Did you know any of the ILWU people then? You say you knew some of the labor guys?

TG: Oh yeah, a few of them, but they were busy doing their thing, and I didn't have any particular connection with it. I suppose the fellow who was the most instrumental in all this was old Mr. [Arnold Leonard] Wills who used to be head of the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] down here, if you remember his name.

DT: Just remember the name, that's all.

TG: He was a New Zealand socialist (who) somehow got into the federal government.

(Laughter)

TG: Yeah, during the New Deal years, he was the first NLRB regional director, or what you call the subregional director (in Hawai'i). And I had some contact with him, or I knew him—(we were) good friends—and I think he was the fellow who suggested that it might be a good idea to (do something), besides making money, and go into labor law.

DT: And the minute you graduated from law school [in 1951], you came back to Hawai'i with the idea, always had the idea of returning to Hawai'i to practice law, right?

TG: Oh, sure. Where else would you go? (Chuckles)

DT: Well, you'd gone to a California school, you might have decided to stay there. (Chuckles) The lure of the Islands brought you back. So, you came back home, and it didn't take long for you to get involved with politics, did it?

TG: Oh, well.

DT: Got back in '51, and . . .

TG: (It took) about two months, yeah.

(Laughter)

CC: Long time.

(Laughter)

DT: And who did you cast your lot with initially? You must have had to find someplace where there was a pocket of politics, a growing concern?

TG: Well, there were a few folks. I started off working with the [International Brotherhood of] Teamsters union even before I got the bar (exam) out of the way, for a month or so. And there were a lot of the folks there, (who were) grassroots Democrats (and who), later, were very active in the Democratic party. At that point, in fact, (they were) active, who sort of opened the door to . . .

DT: How did the Teamster connection happen? Did you answer an ad, or go knocking on doors looking for a job, or did they just. . .

TG: No, Len Wills, the fellow I was telling you about, I guess, was probably as pro-union as any government employee has been anytime, at least he was in favor of keeping the unions moving and strong. As, I think he told me once, he (said), "I called up this dumb guy, [Arthur] Rutledge, (who) keeps making all these stupid mistakes, and asked him why don't you hire somebody who can read and write." (He said he told Rutledge) "I got a guy for you." And then I got a call, worked for (Rutledge) represented (his business) and other people for about a year or so.

DT: Yeah, when did you first open your office? Was it there on Kalākaua [Avenue]?

TG: Yeah, on what used to be, before Rutledge took it over, the Club Blue Rose, or something? It's torn down now.

DT: That's right, on the second floor there. Yeah.

TG: It was a one floor.

DT: Oh, one floor affair, yeah. Okay.

TG: Some kind of a nightclub that went broke.

DT: Right down in, not the heart of Waikīkī but on the edge of Waikīkī in those days.

TG: Just short of where Kalākaua [Avenue] and Kapi'olani [Boulevard] come together.

DT: Well, but this still wasn't party politics. There's a notion that Jack [John A.] Burns had a going concern. Did you join in with Jack Burns and his organization or . . .

TG: There were a lot of party politics besides Jack Burns, of course.

DT: Patsy Mink had a group going, I know.

TG: She came in a little while later, Mō'ili'ili someplace, or McCully. We had, as I indicated, several people I got to know fairly well who were active in various groups of the Democratic party, which was a series of groups. Still is, I guess.

DT: But this had included one of the Heens, Ernie Heen for example?

TG: Yeah, Ernie [Ernest N., Sr.] Heen was—was he city council [i.e., board of supervisors] at that point or hadn't made it yet [Heen served on the O'ahu County Board of Supervisors, 1949–50 and 1958–64], but his family was very active and, of course, I knew his kids [Ernest N. Heen, Jr. and Walter M. Heen] reasonably well. In fact, I think I'd known them before the war. I'm not sure.

CC: When you say it was a series of groups, maybe elaborate a little bit, and you made a reference, well, maybe it still is, but what do you mean by that, a series of groups as opposed to a more broadly based party or in factions?

TG: Well, it was, of course, the minority grouping, if that's the right word. It had been for seventy years, outside of coming fairly close in what was it, '47, '49, somewhere around there.

DT: Late [19]40s they get a tie [1947].

TG: A tie in the house, and then it collapsed.

DT: Republican speaker, yeah.

TG: Anyhow. What it was, was individual fiefdoms. The few Democrats who got elected, like the elder [Ernest] Heen and Herbert [K. H.] Lee, and a number of the others, and there were a number of [board] members who were getting elected in the city, Johnny [John H.] Wilson, of course.

DT: Names like Chuck Mau or . . .

TG: Chuck Mau was a [board of supervisors] member.

DT: . . . Ernie [Ernest K.] Kai ring a bell to you?

TG: Yeah, and these people pretty much had their own little groups, and they sort of coalesced and pulled apart, coalesced and pulled apart. And this was one of [the] things that made people—some people—think, maybe there ought to be something called a party which would maybe make the bonds a little tighter. And some of the Heen people were interested in that, and one thing led to another.

- DT: Well, it's rather significant that you didn't go to work for city hall, because in those days, young attorneys often ended up working in city hall, because Johnny Wilson was sort of the one pocket of Democratic control, although it wasn't as centralized a group at that time, as it is today.
- TG: Oh, I suppose, if you want a government job, you can get one, but I never found it particularly attractive at that level. Besides, I had a modest private practice anyway, which keeps you reasonably independent. You don't have to worry about something happening that you can't control pretty well.
- DT: But by '52, you begin to take some action on behalf of this party. Weren't you campaign chairman or something in the '52 election for O'ahu? O'ahu [county] campaign chairman?
- TG: Oh, yeah, even in '51, early '52, we got into the county committee and pulled in a number of folks, and I think I was one of the vice chairmen or something and I got stuck with being either co-chairman or chairman in '52, and then again in '54. But again, this was an opportunity, I think, to come up with something that looked like a party. And we would actually get people in and discuss whether we're in favor of various types of things being done. You know, ideology, if you pardon the expression, instead of "Vote for George Oaks because he's my brother, vote for George Oaks because he'll do one, two, three." And that was a rather interesting change.
- DT: But you saw a role for party as opposed to, let's say, labor union group or these personality *huis*, then?
- TG: Well, at that point, yeah, I think the party would be sort of an answer to some of these things. The Burns group, which began to emerge about that time, had very heavy ties to the ILWU. And of course, my having had some connections with non-ILWU unions put me on the outside just from that standpoint. But, the ILWU approach, (to independent Democrats), which I think it would still be, if (they) had any soup left—was go along and (if you want to), get along. In other words, you take orders from us. That doesn't work (for some of us).
- DT: The party was pretty well split apart, though, wasn't it, from '48 to '52, the stand-patters and the walk-out faction?
- TG: Oh, yeah, they had a big—I didn't go to that [1950 Democratic territorial] convention, but they had a big split in the convention.
- DT: Yeah, you were out of town when the big split occurred in '48 [1950], I guess it was. [The split was between the ILWU and old-guard Democrats.]
- TG: Yeah, I heard about it later.
- DT: By '52, though, you were back. Did you help in any way, you recall, in the '52 [Democratic] territorial convention to pull things together?
- TG: Well, I think we were trying to get it together, and I didn't have too much of a role in that (convention). (I worked) mostly (at) the county committee level, not (at) the state [territorial] convention, but there was an effort to try to keep it from splitting like it had (previously)

because you don't win by going in different directions.

DT: Did you generally approve of this coalition that was set up?

TG: Oh, I think to make something work, you (have got to) win an election, you (have got to) get votes, you (must get) people going in the same direction.

DT: This was the convention that brought Jack Burns to the territorial chairmanship, really, and Frank Fasi to national committeeman.

TG: Yeah, I think it was. I don't remember exactly, was that the '52 (convention)?

DT: Was '52.

TG: Yeah. Mm hmm.

DT: Alrighty, we'll pick this up and go on from there as soon as we change tapes.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is tape number three of the Tom Gill interview.

DT: Let's pick this up with the election of '52. You were [O'ahu county] campaign chairman, now what do you recall about that? It wasn't the greatest of success, but if you looked for straws in the winds, there were signs that things were going to happen a little bit later. As a matter of fact, if some people had looked a little bit more closely at the '52 election results, they probably could have forecast the '54 [Democratic "revolution,"] but I don't recall that anyone did that.

TG: Well, I think that it was not the kind of thing that people can do because forecasting, generally, is sort of projecting the conventional wisdom, and the conventional wisdom (was) Republicans could never be (beaten). But there were obvious breakthroughs. I mean, there were people getting elected who shouldn't have gotten elected, and there were slippages of votes in certain areas, and which were perfectly obvious after you looked at it awhile. I was surprised that it happened as soon as it did. In fact, it was too soon, we weren't ready for it. But the '52 election was sort of one of these places where the ice begins to crack and you can sort of see things there, but you don't know quite what they mean. And I think it was sort of indicative, too, because, we began to (produce) things called platforms, which at that stage were considered important, particularly if you could keep them short enough to read. And these things began to show up in the campaign, purposely and otherwise, and people began to repeat some of the things without knowing what they meant, but later on were told so they enacted the laws. But I think the movement was there, and it was different.

CC: Could you compare a little bit, as you see it anyway, the difference in your view of the party, and the difference in the [John] Burns kind of view? I mean, you mentioned that there had to be a coalition, you had to go ahead and try to get the votes, but there seems to be a different philosophy about what the party was supposed to be. I'm just wondering if you could elaborate a little bit on that.

- TG: Well, I think there was a difference in that—I'm not being unkind—the non-Burns group, some of them (at least), had a philosophy. The Burns group had none, except get the votes and win. (That) is a philosophy, I suppose, if you look at it (in a certain way).
- DT: Yeah, well, there was a Burns thesis that said combine the Japanese extraction and the union [ILWU] and you'd have it made.
- TG: And try to throw in some Hawaiians, most of whom were bilked. But anyhow, that was part of the approach which didn't appeal to many of the so-called—what would you call them—"eggheads," who thought that maybe you should be trying to come up with ideas about housing, and how you handle land, and what the tax system should look like. All you were getting when you talked to these folks was where are the votes. Well, the two things were important and they should be put together, but not to the exclusion of each other, you see.
- DT: One person in that particular part of the Democratic party history in Hawai'i was really pretty much of an unsung personality, he's not much recalled these days, but the fellow by the name of Bob [Robert G.] Dodge, who I think had quite a bit to do with the platforms which were essentially the same in '52 and '54. Do you recall this and do you recall any of your associations with Bob?
- TG: Oh yeah. Bob and a couple of other folks from the university, I remember old Doc [Robert W.] Clopton and a few others. We used to meet and put together the platform which was later adopted. Or we'd write it out, and see what it looked like, and that was basically where it came from. And Bob was a very inventive and thoughtful fellow. In fact, he was with the [legislative] reference bureau, I think, at one stage, wasn't he?
- DT: He was at one stage [1949–50], and until—well, he left the university in the fall of 1950, so starting '51, he was with Bill [William H.] Heen in practice. But he turned out to be something of a bridge person between the so-called Heen faction, did he not, and the so-called Burns faction.
- TG: Well, Bob was a Democrat, really, and that part of the Heen group was part of the old *kuleana*, what would you call it, personality-type Democrat which had survived by being able to elect a person to the office. And I think he helped bridge it, but Bob basically was interested in ideas, and that's where his strength was.
- DT: As I recall, you had pretty good ties, and pretty good relationships with Johnny [John K., Jr.] Akau, who was sort of a factor of men in the Heen faction who operated just above the university up in the Mānoa housing area?
- TG: Yeah, I think he had a house around here someplace. He was one of the Heen supporters.
- DT: Yeah, just about a block from where we are today, I think.
- TG: Yeah, (chuckles) close to it. They've torn it down. No, he was fairly active, and later, I think, got into difficulties, but he was one of that group, and I think he was also very interested in trying to find some kind of party mechanism, that was part of his feeling.
- DT: Well, you were often alleged that you were closer to that group than any other, also have a



feeling that everybody should be welcomed in the party? You just didn't want it to be limited to particularly the unions, or persons of Japanese extraction, or anything of that sort, you were more interested in the cosmopolitan base for the party. Is that a fair statement, or am I wrong?

TG: Oh, I think that's reasonable because you don't win by subtracting, (but rather) by adding. And a lot of the talent running around in Hawai'i was of all groups, and what you're looking for is somebody that's willing to work and has ideas, and not a complete dummy of some sort. So why close any doors?

DT: Well, whatever the group was known as or called or anything of that sort, there're a number things which you were busily doing along with groups that you kept in touch with by way of organization which laid the foundation for the election of '54, most assuredly, I think.

TG: Well, I think most of the folks we were working with had enough experience to, for example, go to the convention and notice how it was really paper [proxies]. The people weren't voting, paper was voting, and this struck us as being sort of non-democratic, if that's the right word. But that's the way to build power blocs, and you bring in a guy with 100 votes in his pocket and he is more important than the poor fellow that walked in off the street with one vote of his own. In fact, the attendance at the one convention—whichever year it was that I remember watching—the people there, had one vote each, (and) were going one direction, (but) the convention was going the other direction, which (was) not good. And so I think most of the people we worked with decided that was a foolish forum. And so the [O'ahu Democratic] County Committee was much better because the county committee had two votes per precinct. Now of course, that's undemocratic in another respect because some precincts are bigger than others, or were at that stage. But it had one advantage. The people were voting, and we made sure no proxies got in. And so we won the county elections very simply by talking to a lot of folks and then insisting on a secret ballot. Very simple. (Chuckles)

DT: Yeah, well now, you're building to—you're sort of giving us a little background, and I hope you'll be willing to go into more detail about how you got elected county chairman because that occurred in the spring of 1954. After you'd laid the groundwork, you'd had a lot of organizational work done, right, between particularly '52 and '54. By '54, you—can you talk about the climate, how you happened to get in that race for county chairman?

TG: Oh, I guess I was in it anyway because I was a county official even (in) the first year. But by that time, we'd have enough contacts in all of the precincts or most of the precincts. The ones we couldn't really do very well with were the so-called ILWU precincts like Waipahu and (Waialua). We had people out there, but they were overpowered because every time they'd hold a precinct meeting, in would march fifty people and sit down, boom, take it over, boom, and then go back to their shop. And the net result was that the so-called independent Democrats had no chance. But in most of the precincts, and if you're going two votes per precinct, that's a majority by a long shot. There were a lot of people who were active and interested and they weren't very many large blocs that could take them over. So they elected people to the county committee who were of similar mind. And all you had to do with these folks is convince them that the ideas were good, and have a secret ballot so they couldn't get caught.

DT: Now who was your major competitor, you recall, in that?

- TG: Yeah, what was his name, Tommy something, excuse me. Nice fellow, very nice fellow. In '54, Tad [Tadao] Beppu got stuck with the job, I guess.
- DT: Yeah, somebody else had been in that race, and then he was sort of brought in at the last moment . . .
- TG: I think so, I don't remember the details. But Beppu has always been a very good friend, and a very nice guy.
- DT: So even though . . .
- TG: He was sort of nominated to be up front, I think. (Chuckles)
- DT: There was a lot of strong feelings that night, of course.
- TG: Well, there were the mechanics, if that's the right word, from the Burns organization were very upset because we did insist on a secret ballot and they couldn't keep track.
- CC: Where did—I suppose, Patsy Mink had come on the scene about that time. Where did she fit in, in this kind of mixture of . . .
- TG: Same place she always does, which is no place. Patsy is in her own orbit, always has been, always will be.
- DT: So basically, at that time, she had her own group and her own . . .
- TG: Yeah, she came with a little group and I don't know which way she voted. In fact, I don't really know. But Patsy's main push, mostly, has been Patsy.
- DT: Well, she was very much against the proxy system in the convention . . .
- TG: Yeah, I think that was true.
- DT: . . . I think when you start thinking in terms of the '52, particularly the '54 conventions when she was back and quite active in the '54 convention, you were pretty much in agreement with her, weren't you?
- TG: Oh yeah, sure, I would count her as being an independent thinker. She'd do her thing and she wasn't having her string pulled by anybody. Never has.
- DT: Yeah, well she, at that time, I thought, was more or less tied in because she was from Waipahu country out there, she was more or less . . .
- TG: I say her precinct was in town.
- DT: . . . friendly and tied in . . .
- CC: Her precinct was in town [seventh precinct].



DT: . . . was tied in with Jack Burns.

TG: I don't think that ever happened, I don't know that much about it, but if I recall, her original precinct was somewhere in Mō'ili'ili-McCully.

CC: Yeah, it was.

DT: Was she in the seventh or the fourth or do you recall those designations, which was I think, the Mō'ili'ili precinct . . .

TG: I don't think it was that one. There was one further toward the University [of Hawai'i].

DT: Dan [Daniel K.] Inouye's precinct because I think, Dan Inouye's precinct was the seventh.

TG: The one at Washington Intermediate [School], you mean?

DT: Yeah.

TG: That was a biggie, yeah. Well, I don't know exactly how you would describe Patsy's operation except she did, generally, go along with the ideologues, if that's the right word, and I think when she got elected to the legislature, she was probably a very good legislator, and called her own shot.

DT: So you respected her more as an independent thinker in the Democratic party than as a member of any particular faction.

TG: Oh, she's not an organization person. She runs on her own little wheels.

DT: Oh, she did a lot of organizing, though, didn't she? She had a fairly substantial group.

TG: Well, she helped quite a bit.

DT: 'Cause I know she had a little group, and I think you sat in on it a couple times, at any rate, the little group known as the Everyman's Group [Everyman Organization], that she dubbed it that way. [Mink organized the Everyman Organization to discuss how rules of the Democratic party could be changed to enable young people to play a larger role. The nucleus of the Young Democratic Club of O'ahu evolved from this group.]

TG: I don't know much about it.

DT: Met in Gilmore Hall [at UH].

TG: You know more than I do. I wasn't included.

DT: At times Matsuo Takabuki was there, times when Masato Doi was—in other words, there'd be various people coming and going. She would invite varying personalities, let's say, in the Democratic party, from around and of course, she used [it] as her base. This was—well, you were always stuck with using schools and the university facility, weren't you? Could you explain why?

TG: Oh, yeah, sure. In fact, I think one of the early print jobs on the platform came out of some university mimeograph machine which caused a great deal of flack when somebody found out about it, but (chuckles) so what.

DT: Well, that wasn't the use of facilities I was referring to. I was thinking in terms of the buildings themselves, as a meeting place.

TG: Oh yeah.

DT: Because you really didn't have money to afford any other meeting space. You couldn't—now the Democratic party's meeting in hotels all the time, but in those days, you met in the schools and the university facilities.

TG: Yeah, I think the county committee, what was it, '54 [1952] and on, at least for a few years, was one of the first times that we've had, quote, an office, which, I think we've managed a total of about \$150 a month for a few years.

DT: The one thing I recall you did, was preach unity a great deal prior to the '54 elections.

TG: Well, it was a way of getting things to coalesce. Now, I'm not sure exactly what you would call it, but to get an idea that people should have a platform, which—whatever that means, but at least a program that they should, a, understand, b, sell, and c, implement, was a very radical thought. And of course, it's even more radical today. They don't have one. (DT chuckles.) It's anathema to them, but this was put together as I indicated, (in) a couple elections. In fact, one of the, I guess it was the last Republican session—when was that, '53 or was it '51? I don't remember.

DT: Fifty-three, mm hmm.

TG: Probably would have been '53, yeah. We gathered a series of bills that had been introduced (at) various (times) by various people which, more or less, followed the (Republican) platform, you know, category a—one, two, three; b; and so forth. And then we set the Republicans up. Some of us were helping in the legislature, and this of course, was not terribly amusing to Jack Burns. He felt it was terrible, but anyhow, we did it anyway, with a few wild hares. We even got old Charlie [Charles E.] Kauhane who was the [Democratic] minority [floor] leader from Kalihi who—a character in his own right—to get in on the act. And they had a minority of Democrats, mostly from the fifth district or Kalihi in the house. And when the large bill came to the floor, I think it was a budget bill, I forget exactly what the vehicle was, we got (Charlie) to stand up, and he would say, "I have an amendment to offer, Mr. Speaker." Hiram Fong was the speaker, of course. Boom. He'd put it on the floor, and it'd be one of these bills that would say what we wanted to say.

Actually, what we were doing, which was dirty pool, I suppose, was (to go) down the Republican platform, (take) the things that they'd put in there but never did anything about. And we made sure our bills covered that. And so he'd [Kauhane] stand up and offer the amendment, and [Hebden] Porteus [majority floor leader] would stand up and move to table it, and boom, it'd go down the chute, and we did this twenty times or more in that one afternoon. And the Republicans were so dumb, they didn't know what was happening, and they had defeated each one of their platform planks. (DT chuckles.) (We) then, put (this) into

a little brochure and passed (it) around at their rallies at the next (election) which caused great consternation. But it's a way of educating (the public), if you want to use the word loosely. "You [the Republicans] said this, why didn't you do it?"

DT: Yeah, you instituted the publication too, as I recall, with the help of some university folk, I believe it was with the help of university folk, known as the *O'ahu Democrat* [published by the O'ahu Democratic County Committee] which sort of resurfaced here again in recent years. But this was a little, sort of a half sheet or full sheet folded sidewise which was published just before the '54 elections, I recall, from '52 to '54 period.

TG: We ran it sometimes quarterly, sometimes monthly, and sometimes we'd put it in a little booklet or whatever and some of the university people were very helpful in putting it together. And basically, it was stories on key points that people should be talking about. I can remember we did one on the Wilson Tunnel disaster which occurred about that time, and this sort of laid out all the bad things that had happened because of lousy engineering and so forth, and they threatened to sue us. Big deal.

DT: But for you and your role in that '54 election campaign where you were county chairman, you had to deal with a couple prima donnas that didn't do much to help party unity. You want to talk about that for a while? I'm referring . . .

TG: There's a long list of those. Which ones do you have in mind?

DT: Well, (chuckles) two prominent prima donnas of the day, and shall we say in later years, too. And that was Frank [F.] Fasi who was wanting to unseat Johnny [John H.] Wilson and take over as mayor of Honolulu, and Jack Burns who had a great desire to be the delegate to Congress. He'd lost back in the [19]40s and he wanted to snap back and become delegate in '54. And you had some problems there. Would you like to talk about that or would you try to forget it. (Chuckles)

TG: Oh, they weren't really problems, they just—they didn't help, particularly, because they're all doing their own thing, which, in a way, is all right, because they kept out of the way. They didn't confuse the matter so particularly. Fasi, of course, has always run on his own wheel. I suppose that was an education as to the kind of guy you're dealing with. No matter what he said today, watch out for tomorrow, and the whole thing was pretty clear because Fasi never really participated in any of this, except take care of himself.

Burns was busy with other things. He had the central committee and the main power mechanism, I suppose, and of course, they were turning out votes very well, but they didn't interfere with the campaign because they didn't know quite what was going on. The county committee ran the campaign pretty well.

DT: Well, we'll talk about the rest of that campaign and about the remarkable results of 1954 as soon as we've changed tapes.

JC: That is the end of the Tom Gill interview on tape three, please turn this tape over for tape number four.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: The following is videotape number four of the Tom Gill interview. It took place on May 5, 1988.

DT: Well, you don't want to try to recall every detail of that '54 campaign, but one of the highlights, at least, I think in retrospect, it turned out to be a highlight, maybe it wasn't so well recognized at that time, was the time you got involved in the so-called 'Āina Haina debate [held on October 24, 1954]. And one of your tactics, if you'll recall, in the '54 campaign was to try to get the Republicans to debate the issues, debate the issues, and you drove this home time and time again. Then came a time when you decided that you should have a formal debate, and you'd met with the Republicans, but you hadn't been able to reach an agreement. But you decided to go ahead and hold the debate with empty chairs for Republicans, and this worked a good number of times, until one time in 'Āina Haina, they suddenly showed up. Do you recall that meeting, and any commentary on that?

TG: Yeah, it worked even better then. (DT chuckles.) Sam [Samuel P.] King, I think, led his delegation into the cafetorium, or wherever it was.

DT: That's Sam P. King, yeah.

TG: Yeah, and of course, Sam is an interesting fellow, I've known him for years. Basically a bit of an authoritarian at that stage. I think he's mellowed quite a bit. And he sort of stomped in there, and decided to take over the mike. And of course, I think we had it—it was being recorded, and I think we also had it on the air, was it KIKI?

DT: KIKI, that's right.

TG: Yeah, okay. And so the best thing to do at that point, was to let him, if you use the word, make a horse's ass out of himself, which he did. Got up there and made great pompous remarks and we'd ask him a question and he'd sort of bustle it aside, and dash over and grab the mike and make another noise. We got a tape of this thing and played it back several times. It was very useful. And they didn't do it after that, I don't believe. That was the end of it.

DT: No, it occurred fairly close to the final election result, (TG chuckles) at any rate, but when you replayed the tape—they denied it all, right—and then when you replayed the tape, why, this sort of put the capstone [on] what turned out to, ultimately, be a victory. But you had quite an exchange with him because you were moderating the debate, were you not, when he stormed in?

TG: Supposedly.

DT: He took over.

TG: Well, it was moderated. Modulated, I guess, after that, but yeah, that was a minor incident, really. They'd had it by then, though. People weren't quite aware of it. What really happened was that the cracks that appeared in '52, just opened up. And all of a sudden, people realized they didn't have to do what they'd done before.

DT: Then they—or Sam P. King, in particular—attacked the Democrats as being communists. And pink and soft on . . .

TG: Oh, yeah, well, they went on for . . .

DT: Communism and . . .

TG: . . . two elections that way.

DT: Well, one of your colleagues took him to task, right?

TG: Oh, I don't remember.

DT: I'm referring to Dan [Daniel K.] Inouye's extemporizing that evening.

TG: Oh, you're talking about . . .

DT: At the 'Āina Haina debate.

TG: Oh, that thing, yeah. Yes, he made, I think, quite an emotional pitch. I don't remember what exactly, what went on in it. It was the usual—"usual," that's not the right word, but the war veteran pitch, if you want to use the expression, which of course, made a lot of their comments look stupid. But I don't think anybody was really caught up in the Republican rhetoric. The rhetoric was dead by the time they were using it. They'd used it for so long, they'd worn it out. And at that point, it was probably kind of an honor to be [called] a communist by Sam King. (DT chuckles.) In the sense, you know, that proved you (chuckles) weren't one of them. But that's neither here nor there. I think the real problem was that the social shift had taken place. They no longer had control of the vote.

DT: Well, at any rate, the 'Āina Haina debate sort of provided some dramatics, sort of a focal point of what the entire campaign had been about, and so that's, perhaps, why it's remembered.

TG: It really wasn't that important. (But it got attention because of the media.)

DT: Well, you had media there, and you also had the newspapers, of course, covering it in the fashion of the day. And at any rate, a few days later, I guess you surprised even yourself, didn't you? You'd been the campaign chairman here on O'ahu for the Democrats in '54, I think you were probably surprised along with quite the rest of us at the results.

TG: Yeah, being surprised, maybe because I'm a born pessimist, but it seemed to me that it would take a little longer than it did because, you know, you don't turn a century of habits around in fifteen minutes. And the problem was that, as it turned out later, that the folks who were running to get elected, weren't ready to get elected. They didn't know enough. This was a

egghead approach, of course. They knew enough to get elected, and that's all you need, really, I suppose. But, and I can remember the kickoff speech on that campaign, in fact, Danny [Inouye] was part of that, too, out at the Kaimukī [Community Park] gym. Raining like hell, everything was pouring. But we had a fairly good crowd, and we'd (indoctrinated many) with the platform, and these people were standing up, including Danny, and they were talking about taxation according to ability to pay. I knew damn well they didn't know what that meant. They didn't. It's a graduated income tax, of course, but the rhetoric was there. And they were doing very well at it. And when they got elected, it became perfectly obvious that they didn't know what it meant, at least not (entirely). And it took a little doing. In fact, [Governor] Sam [Samuel Wilder] King saved us. In '55, the legislature got all these [Democratic] party bills in there which were really clones of the [Democratic] platform, they put 'em in, passed 'em, after some delay. And he [Governor King] vetoed them all. It was wonderful, terrific. Suppose they'd passed some of those things? They were defective, you know. [In 1955, King vetoed seventy-one Democratic bills, of which only two were overridden by the legislature.]

(Laughter)

TG: People didn't know how to draft them. But by vetoing it, he solidified the ideological issue. And then, I think, inadvertently, the *Star-Bulletin* helped. A gentleman by the name of Millard [S.] Purdy used to be the political reporter, and part of the coverage, he took the Democratic platform, and he took the bills that were passed, and then he ran a column as to what happened to them. It was all platform, bill, vetoed. Platform, bill, vetoed. Fifty-seven or quite a large number.

DT: Something like that [seventy-one vetoes], yeah.

TG: And it was a wonderful page, and so we reprinted it and ran it for a campaign literature.

DT: It was wonderful for Democrats. It wasn't wonderful for Millard because as I recall, Purdy lost his job, pretty much as a result of that.

TG: I don't know whether he did or not. He went someplace else. [Purdy resigned from the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* in 1957.]

DT: He went someplace else after having been assigned to the sports page.

TG: Was that it? Well. (DT chuckles.) I guess he did pay the price.

DT: He went to pineapple research companies [Pineapple Companies of Hawai'i as assistant public relations director].

TG: But it was perfectly objective reporting. He just tabulated what happened, and that was the best thing that could have been done.

DT: Meanwhile, you didn't let the grass grow under your feet even though the Democrats lost two big races [in 1954], you might say, that mayorship and the delegateship. Fasi and Burns both were defeated. You'd swept the legislature, and that's where, for the first time, you had complete control of the legislature. But you immediately went to work, was it the senate the

first time around in '55?

TG: Yeah.

DT: As an attorney?

TG: I was the [territorial] senate attorney. That's because of Herbert Lee, I believe, who was one of the old-timers who got reelected and was a very strong supporter of programs and things, another party stalwart, so to speak. But at least, I think, a good Democrat.

DT: But still, you couldn't keep a lot of those measures from being defective. You just referred to measures as being defective.

TG: Well, I think it's . . .

DT: You were in a position to know.

(Laughter)

TG: (Yes, I) drafted some of them.

(Laughter)

TG: But, no. Basically, they were all later passed in one form or another, almost all. But basically, it was a very difficult thing to do when you first start off to come up with a tax bill that really makes sense and is going to operate correctly. And there were certain number of other things which were very complicated, and you have to know something about it to really do a good job, and we didn't have the staff or the know-how among the legislators to really make it happen. We'd made the bills pass, and they were in fairly good shape, and they would have been better than any of the bills that the Republicans ever thought about passing. But Sam King saved us. So it would have been worse if he'd signed them, and (then) ground (them) to death bureaucratically.

DT: Here, you're referring to Governor Samuel Wilder King.

TG: Yes, Samuel Wilder.

DT: Not the son. You continued on in the legislature, did you not? You worked in the senate in '55 and '57.

TG: (I was) [administrative] assistant to the [house] speaker in the '57 session.

DT: You worked long hours in those days, too, didn't you, in that legislature?

TG: Oh, everybody does, or did. (You) didn't go home when the sun went down, obviously.

DT: I recall many of the nights you were down there till midnight or beyond. You must not have gotten much sleep in those days.



TG: Well, you can sleep during the session. It was no problem.

(Laughter)

DT: Well, the legislature wasn't built for much sleeping in those days because it was so compact there in the palace ['Iolani Palace] that you didn't have much . . .

TG: Well, it was sort of interesting because I had an office which was one of those little antechambers off the main palace chamber itself, and after the session or between sessions, we still had work to do, and we worked out there. But the (chamber where the house met) was a museum. They put back the *kāhilis*. And 'Iolani Luahine, the charming lady from Kona, (was) one of the icons, I guess, of the Hawaiian cultural revival. She was a tremendous dancer and chanter, and she used to be the curator of (the chamber) and it was sort of fascinating. Late at night, she'd go in and talk to the pictures. (DT chuckles.) Really. (There were) good conversations going on.

CC: Did the pictures talk back?

TG: I think they did.

(Laughter)

DT: You were administrative assistant to the speaker, weren't you?

TG: Yeah. I think that was one word for it.

DT: This was speaker . . .

TG: Vince [O. Vincent] Esposito.

DT: Vince Esposito. And you planned to continue to do this, well, maybe we should talk a little bit about statehood. Things were building, weren't they? More of your legislation passed again in '57, more of it survived in '57, and then again, you had a session prior to statehood in '59.

TG: The last territorial session, you mean.

DT: Last territorial session. What about the slow drive for statehood? You recall everybody was in favor of it or you recall the factions about statehood. What sticks in your mind about the statehood drive?

TG: Well, I think it was one of those things which, I guess, became inevitable. Not everybody was for it, that's for sure. In fact, some of the very conservative groups in town or who might be called conservative, [Alice] Kamokila Campbell for one, old [Ingram M.] Stainback, the former governor . . .

DT: [Walter F.] Dillingham, I suppose.

TG: I suppose. (They) were not terribly enthusiastic about the idea, but that didn't make any



difference. I think at this point, you (had) enough people who had arrived, who thought they ought to be as good as anybody else, and (so) why shouldn't [we] be a state? Now, of course, this shows a lack of sophistication to some extent. There were some people who were cynical enough to say that we might have been smarter to follow Muñoz [Luis Muñoz Rivera] in Puerto Rico where he came up with a commonwealth arrangement where we got all of the money from the federal government and didn't have to give much back [commonwealths were exempt from federal taxation]. We just went in (as a state) and (paid) our taxes. But anyhow, it was happening and it was a good thing. I think it made a few changes, or at least it caused the legislature to make a few changes because they had to go from a territorial session to the first statehood session which is when (many things) happened.

DT: You had a relatively calm session in '57, but in '59, things didn't go so smoothly.

TG: Well, there began to (be a) split in the party. It became open. It was there all the time, but the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union], I think, Jack Hall, was a very confident fellow, had done a lot for the community, had one thing in mind, and that (was) power and nobody else was going to share it. He controlled the neighbor island delegations, by and large. Some are exceptions to that, but (not many). He had probably gotten the word in the '57 session that there were a number of people including [O. Vincent] Esposito, maybe yours truly and a few others that didn't always jump when he whistled. And that was disturbing. So (in) the '59 session, there was a split. Most of the neighbor island Democrats followed the ILWU and they caused a schism. Then the ILWU Democrats went across to the Republicans and (set up) a [bipartisan] coalition and took over the house.

DT: Meanwhile, you actually had become elected to the territorial [house] . . .

TG: (Yes), I got (elected) in the '58 election.

CC: Okay.

TG: So that was the, I think, the first obvious break (or) division (of) the party.

DT: So, by this time you were part of the—operated inside of the legislature, but this was a pretty bitter defeat, particularly for Esposito, wasn't it? Perhaps you, who were new to the legislature, a little bit less so, but . . .

TG: Well, I think it was a bitter thing in many respects because, it was actually a taking over of the mechanism by people that you might call machine-type politicians who'll do anything to get the vote. And they were not particularly interested in the program. The program didn't bother them, particularly. Well, there were some notable exceptions, but it [i.e., the Democratic program] wasn't their thing. (Their) thing was power. So you pull the bloc together, boom, you take it. (However,) they didn't have too much effect for a number of years because they didn't have any ideas anyway, and the programs still kept flowing through, pretty well into the mid-[19]60s.

DT: Would you put Elmer Cravalho in that category? He became the speaker of this coalition.

TG: Oh, Elmer was a very bright fellow, but very fast on his feet. And Elmer was beholden to the ILWU. They used to scare the hell out of him, and in fact, he mentioned that a couple of

times. So he went where the (power) was.

DT: But at the same time, he accepted you as—what was it, majority [floor] leader?

TG: Probably “accepted,” if that’s the word. What I’m saying is the man (was) competent and he knew how to make things work. I think that’s one of his strong points, and he demonstrated that over the years.

DT: You were part of the power group, really, when you organized the state house, weren’t you?

TG: By that time, it had sort of slipped around again.

DT: Because you ran again for the state house [in 1959], right?

TG: Oh, yeah. Mm hmm.

DT: And then . . .

TG: So the basic vote pattern was still there. Elmer was it, and then they would allot other things to other people.

DT: But you didn’t depend upon Republicans when you organized the state house, did you?

TG: No.

DT: So once again, there was a semblance of Democratic unity after statehood?

TG: More or less, (yes).

DT: More or less.

(Laughter)

DT: You want to elaborate?

TG: No, I don’t think it was too bad. It was just that, I think at that point, the people who had made the coalition in ’59 were not terribly proud of it, maybe that’s the right word. And to (make) amends, of course, they had to (help) pull things back together, and as long as the basic power group was where they felt it should be, this was all right. The facade was important. And to some extent, the facade was there.

CC: But would you say that, at that point, it really ended the opportunity to forge what you were trying to create in terms of a party structure or . . .

TG: Well, I think by that time, the party structure idea was dying. It was not a practical thing for most of these people. Once you get elected and then get reelected, then that’s it. What do you need a party for, (at that stage)?

DT: But you did come back to it in a sense, maybe I shouldn’t interject myself so much here, but

you came back at it in a sense in order to forge what came about in 1962 as a party victory. The first party sweep really occurred in '62, so there was a semblance of a gathering of various party groups between '59 and '62.

TG: Oh, Dan, that's a reaction, that's a reaction to the screw-up of the year before, or the election before when, let's see, what was that, '60—whenever [John] Burns ran for . . .

DT: Fifty-nine was the first time [he ran for governor], and then he ran the second time and became elected in '62.

TG: (Yes), but he got beat in the election [for governor, by William F. Quinn] right after the (ILWU-Republican) coalition (took over the legislature).

DT: [Nineteen] fifty-nine, that's right.

TG: Yeah, okay. Now, what happened there was that he shot himself in the foot. (Burns) had accolades from all of the folks who engineered the coalition and the Republicans (who) joined up with the ILWU Democrats (to put it together). (He praised them) from Washington on the radio in (his) statehood speech when statehood was first passed in '59, (which) was during that (legislative) session.

DT: All right. We'll pick it up at that point after we've changed tapes. (Chuckles)

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is videotape number five of the Tom Gill interview.

DT: What about this pragmatic gathering of the clan between 1959 and 1962. It was a very practical period of politics. Didn't the [William] Heen faction really join or were asked to join, or decided that to preserve this element of party, they had to join with the Burns forces in order to win the election of '62?

TG: (It was) more the other way around, I think. (In) the '59 election, as I mentioned, Burns had shot himself in the foot by alienating practically all of the O'ahu (Democratic) house members and a lot of the senators who were Democrats by standing behind the coalition and praising it. (This) was a (pretty) stupid (thing for) a party official or leader (to do). And as a result, when the election came up, (many of us) said, "Well, you didn't need us a few months ago, why do you need us now?" And so a large part of the O'ahu mechanism, the people who had votes or were elected and had followings and so forth, just said, "Be my guest." They were ignored by the Burns faction, pretty much until it got down towards the last month or so. I think it was [William F.] Quinn running at that point, and he was obviously taking some big chunks out of (them), and all of a sudden they [the Burns faction] came around and said, "Help, help, help, help."

We said, "Okay, if you want help, we'll come out." And I think most of the people that Burns had scorched a few months earlier, came out and worked pretty hard. But it wasn't enough. Quinn beat him. And this drove a message home through even the thickest political skull that it's best to be together and not apart. Of course, that translated later into something in '62 which might be called a rejoining.

DT: Yeah, well, politics being what it is, the thing that always puzzled me was that the non-Burns groups, call it that, did not exact a higher price for their support in 1962 than they did. In other words, apparently, they went in without any *quid pro quo*, and agreed to help the Burns faction win in '62.

TG: Well, it was mainly because, basically, they are politically dumb. If you say to them you want a party, you want a party that works, let's get together and make it work, they say, "Okay, okay, let's go." They don't say, "Now wait a minute, what's the price for all this," because you're not bargaining, necessarily, for your own special interests. And that was a great weakness of this group. You see, they never (would) drive a hard bargain or (take) blood when they could get it.

DT: You mean the non-Burns group?

TG: Yeah.

DT: They didn't drive a hard bargain. Yeah, I would. But the Burns forces would have understood if you'd have said, "We want four cabinet officers," for example.

TG: Oh, yeah. Sure.

DT: Burns people would have understood. Do you think they would have . . .

TG: I didn't know whether they would have followed through on that . . .

DT: Well, I was going to ask you.

TG: . . . but they would have understood. But nobody (in the "non-Burns" group) would make that kind of demand. That isn't what you (were supposed to do). You want to get (political) control; you want people elected, and people in the right spot, and then they're supposed to do something (constructive). Of course, that didn't happen.

CC: Well prior to that '62 election, a young fellow got involved that, subsequently, had a lot to do with Burns' campaigns, and that's Bob [Robert C.] Oshiro. Do you remember your first contact with Mr. Oshiro, and how he got involved in the party and all?

TG: Oh, yeah. He was a precinct officer out in Wahiawā, and fairly active worker and did quite a few good things. Somehow, he evolved into sort of a backroom guru. He is still regarded, I guess at this point, as being somewhat of a guru even now. And Bob had good ideas, but basically, he was sort of a power broker. It's your turn to do this, it's your turn to do (that), and everybody (should) go along and get along. And he worked on the '62 slate that way [as state chair of the Democratic party].

CC: So that style started to manifest itself.

TG: After it became successful, why, success is its own excuse, isn't it? But of course, after the '62 election, you know, you get the governorship, you still have the legislature, some of your troublemakers are out of town, including me [TG was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Hawai'i in 1962], the consolidation takes place, you take over the

bureaucracy, it's in place, then, you don't need anybody else.

DT: Now, this may be the big undoing of the Democratic party as a party, was a failure to follow through on what had been achieved in '62 which you started to skip over there and you said you were out of town. I think what should be stated here, and we should go back a step, and that is you decided to run for Congress, right?

TG: Yeah, I was interested in it, but it appeared that that would be the only place that would fit into the plan that was being formulated, so, okay. It's worth seeing what's on the Potomac [River] just once, anyway.

DT: But you really didn't want to run for U.S. Congress, or did you? There was also a possibility you might have run for lieutenant governor, right?

TG: Not, lieutenant governor, that's the real pits, but there were some talk about developing that . . .

DT: You actually went to the pits later [1966], so.

TG: Oh, yeah. (DT chuckles.) The pits come along as an alternative.

DT: But your main interest was here in Hawai'i and the future of Hawai'i, and yet you, what was to yours truly, a take out. You decided to go to United States Congress. You sort of debated this once before, and debated or anything of that sort.

TG: No particular debate on it. It's, I suppose, a way to get a free trip, but the net result is that some things happened nationally that are very important to the state, and if you're going to know what they are, you might as well take a look at them. And so, I think it was a very educational couple of years, and it turned out to be very important couple of years in terms of the civil rights, and things of this sort that occurred (in those years).

CC: Had there been discussion, though, in terms of the state structure that this was okay for Tom Gill to look into this race, or what? I mean had you . . .

TG: Oh, (it was) much preferred because then (I'd) be out of town (and wouldn't) be a bother. And as anybody knows, the conventional wisdom about congressional seats is, once you get in 'em (you) get locked in, (and) you stay out of town. And it doesn't really matter what you do 'cause nobody knows down here what you're doing. And the net result is you don't have any real problems unless you're dumb enough to come back and talk about 'em.

DT: Yeah, because of that, some people were actually saying, rightly or wrongly, that Gill has finally caved into Burns and going along with a balanced ticket and get out of town, sort of thing, that he was—his ambition was greater than what he'd been talking about—party and the future of the state and so forth. Were you aware of that?

TG: Oh, I'm sure there were some conversation along that line, but it was a way to get a ticket that worked, and it worked. Everybody got elected.

DT: The people who were saying that were not necessarily your enemies. They were your friends,

too. I mean, they were concerned about the situation. At any rate, you won rather handily in '62, did you not?

TG: Led the ticket, I think. I don't know how that happened, but anyhow, it did.

DT: So off to Washington [D.C.] for Tom Gill. But along with that, the first top to bottom Democratic sweep in terms of major offices and the legislature entirely. It made up for the losses in '59.

TG: Well, I think a lot of that occurred for a number of reasons. One of course, was that the first statehood session, which took over in '59 and '60, did a pretty good job, and a lot of folks worked on it. And this is when the entire state government was restructured. In fact, it's still pretty much the way it was [set up]. And stuffed into the constitutional framework and a lot of the new laws were put in place, and (many) things happened at that stage because of statehood. And I think this had a good impression on most people and it made the so-called sweep of '62 not inevitable, but much easier.

DT: So you'd view this period of '59 and '62 as sort of a high-water mark of the legislature, then?

TG: I suspect there haven't [been] too many that exceeded it.

CC: What about the Washington scene? You mentioned a couple, some of those things that were happening that you thought had importance both nationally and for Hawai'i. What were the things that you got involved with when you got to Washington?

TG: Well, I think (many of) the things that were happening (were) because of lots of effort that had occurred for ten years before (that) in Washington, but strange things (did) occur. It was in the middle of the [John F.] Kennedy administration, of course, (that) he got shot [1963]. And this does great things (to) people in Congress. They suddenly dashed out and (did) all sorts of things they wouldn't have done otherwise, because they want to memorialize (the president). It's a funny showmanship operation. But many of the things which had been talked about for many, many years including the Civil Rights Act, (which was finally) passed in '64. It's still there. In fact, I was looking at a couple of the provisions this morning about a case that involves a couple of the civil rights sections and I recognized the one that some of us put together. It was called the "Gill bill" (jokingly at that) stage. Anyhow, all of this was happening because of the pressures and the sudden (churning) that took place when Kennedy was shot. It just went crazy. The (Congress) passed all kinds of things which they would not have been able to do otherwise. Don't ask me to explain the psychology, but that's what happened. And the civil rights bill was certainly one of them. It was a great milestone. And I was lucky to be on a couple of the committees that were handling it. Of course, I couldn't get (much) interest down here. It was not a big issue (in Hawai'i).

DT: Well, that would have been something very new for Hawai'i because we'd been bypassed by the big issues in Washington for so long, we weren't in [the] habit yet, of thinking of things in terms of national . . .

TG: Well, I wrote back a couple of times to different people in education and (other areas), and said, "Look, can we have some testimony, something that'll support this bill. This is very important to the country, I think." All (I) got back was sort of (a) stunned silence, like



“What?”

(Laughter)

CC: It was kind of ironic that one of the major fears about Hawai‘i’s statehood was this sort of “rabid” populace that would be pushing for civil rights reform and all that sort of thing.

TG: Well, we were different. We had achieved, that may not be the right word, but we had gone much further than most of the Mainland states in social integration. Sure, (we had) all kinds of different people, but they weren’t out throwing rocks at each other. This was the “go along, get along” (mind-set and) there were a lot of interesting things about it. So the psychology (was) entirely different. You’re not looking at that Black guy and saying, “Is he my enemy?” and vice versa, of course. All of these social schisms that are still torturing the Mainland—and over here, to some extent (now—)but (it was) just a different milieu (at that time). I had to learn the whole (racial problem) thing from scratch. It was not something I understood. I remember getting in deep trouble a couple times by saying the wrong thing, without thinking it was wrong.

Well, just to tell stories, but one of the very charming ladies that was (with) Adam Clayton Powell’s committee [Education and Labor], she was the chief clerk, I think. She’d been a university teacher—she’s Black, of course, from the South—and been through all of the tortures that went on there for twenty, thirty years. (She was a) very charming person, and she sort of saw me as a neophyte that showed up and didn’t know his left foot from first base, (so) she helped me a little bit. One day, I made a big mistake. I was sitting in the cafeteria eating lunch, and she brought in this Black lady who was her friend, and introduced her as Doctor something something. First name, second name. I didn’t know her, so I said, “(I am) glad to meet you,” and I used her first name (only). (Oh, that was) terrible. And it’s still a problem. What does Jessie want? Oop, first name, you see. Well, this didn’t occur to me because down here [Hawai‘i], if you call somebody by their second name, you probably don’t like ‘em. It’s a different society. And she stomped out because I called her by her first name (instead of calling her Dr. so-and-so). Well, you have to learn these things, and it’s a different society, isn’t it?

Debbie was right. That’s her first name. She said the civil rights bill was fine. You (won’t) have (much) trouble in the South. Your trouble (is going to be) up North where you have *de facto* segregation which you can’t (solve by passing a law). Two years later, she (was) right. There (were) riots all over the place. She knew exactly what was going on. It (was) an interesting experience (knowing her).

DT: I imagine you had a lot of interesting experiences there in Washington, right, the two years that you were there?

TG: Including some lying S.O.B. who stood up and got us in the [Gulf] of Tonkin, but.

(Laughter)

DT: You regret that aspect, I take it.

TG: I certainly do. There was only two votes against it [i.e., Gulf of Tonkin resolution] in the

House, and I wasn't one of them, damn it, because they never explained anything, except just (to) pass this (resolution) so we can go chase some gunboat or something or other. Sounded something like the Persian Gulf.

DT: Well, keep in mind that the vast majority of [the] American public, I mean, when it comes to getting involved in Vietnam, there was about 80 percent in favor of it.

TG: Oh, yeah. Very, very strong push (at that point).

DT: Based upon, perhaps, maybe poor information, but nonetheless, I mean, if you talk about democracy being of the people, by the people and for the people, what involvement there was—and it was based upon a considerable amount of idealism, too.

TG: No, this (was) the “Munich syndrome,” (but) backwards, a mirror image. We caved in in Europe and look what happened. (So) we will not cave in again. (But) the same thing happened, (except) it was worse.

DT: Right.

TG: So everybody was saying, “I ain't gonna let those guys get away with nothing.” And the net result was disaster because history repeats itself, but never quite in the same way. And if you don't know enough about it, you're a damn fool and you get in trouble. And we got some examples of that in Washington right now, don't we?

DT: At any rate, you got heavily involved in the national scene. This also included going to the national conventions of the Democratic party in '60 and in '64, correct?

TG: Ah, yes. I think that's so.

DT: I think you were at the [John F.] Kennedy convention with the big birthday celebration for Lyndon Johnson. (TG chuckles.) Do you have any recollection from those times?

TG: Well, that was just sort of a side issue, I guess. It didn't add up to much. The [John F.] Kennedy convention in '60 was fairly interesting. Of course, we were backing [Adlai] Stevenson [for Democratic nomination for president]. That's how you always stay in the mainstream, (DT chuckles) but the . . .

DT: There were a couple of [Hawai'i] votes for Kennedy, one-and-a-half, I guess it was. (Chuckles)

TG: Yeah, there was one-and-a-half. But the Stevenson people went with Kennedy, but of course, there was only one vote so it didn't make any difference. And I don't think that put us on the inside with the JFK [Kennedy] regime, even though I got to know Bobby [Robert Kennedy] pretty well in Washington. And most of his people, including Ted [Edward] Kennedy, was floating around (our) edges then (because) we supported their positions (with) votes. (However), we weren't part of the inner core or the Boston mafia, or whatever you want to call it.

CC: Bobby just had some recently interesting quotes released about his views of Lyndon Johnson.



TG: He didn't like Lyndon, as I recall. (DT chuckles.) Of course, there were a lot of people that didn't, and they were right. He was a very difficult person or mean S.O.B, whichever way you want to look at it.

DT: But in '64, he was very popular in the Democrats. You renominated him without any difficulty at all. A matter of fact, you had a spot on the program or two, didn't you?

TG: Oh, very minor, spear carrier role of some sort which is ridiculous. But no, I think Johnson's surge, he could have done a very great job if he hadn't gotten Vietnamesed, if that's the right word. He started off, and he knew legislative momentum. This was his big forte, having been leader of the [U.S.] Senate for many, many years. And he just pumped those bills out. Kennedy could have never got to first base with those bills. (Johnson) just pumped (them) out, and they passed and everybody cheered. If he (had just) stayed on (domestic issues he would have been a great president). He knew his business pretty well. Of course, he's a unreformed New Dealer really, when you get right down to it. He came out of [Franklin D.] Roosevelt era and Texas. But when he got beyond that point, (into) international affairs, he was out of his depth. And unfortunately, he had a personality which I think just was his own worst enemy, sort of like (what) [Richard] Nixon had in a sense, a different sense.

DT: There were reasons why you probably appreciated the fact that you didn't get some national recognition because you were planning, I guess, even at that early stages in '64 to run for the United States Senate, weren't you?

TG: Oh, (yes). It had come to my attention that Washington is quite a few miles from Hawai'i, and if you're going to live in Hawai'i and have to commute, jet lag is not the greatest of all experiences. And of course, at this stage, we didn't have all the money and staff or anything else. But to do a job, you had to keep going back and forth, and to get reelected, you've got to be pumping the local scene all the time. And if you're going to do a job in Washington, which I guess really isn't a great concern for a lot of people [here], you got to be there. The six-year term in the Senate has a great attraction from that standpoint, which some of our local folks have discovered.

CC: And Hiram Fong looked little vulnerable to you at that point?

TG: I don't know whether he was vulnerable or not. The polls weren't all that good. The problem, of course, was that he was part of the structure—the ILWU, Burns, so forth. Not inside, but on the edge.

DT: We'll return to this campaign and your career in—your might-have-been career in the United States Senate as soon as we change tape. We'll pick it up there.

JC: This is the end of the Tom Gill series of interviews that took place on May 5, 1988. The second part of these interviews will take place on May 11, 1988, and they'll be on a separate audiotape starting with tape number six, videotape number six.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 17-15-2-88

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Thomas P. Gill (TG)

May 11, 1988

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Chris Conybeare (CC) and Daniel W. Tuttle, Jr. (DT)

Joy Chong: This is the second part of the Tom Gill interview which took place on May 11, 1988. This is videotape number six.

CC: Well, we can begin. It's May 11, and this is a continuation of the Hawai'i political oral history interview with Tom Gill. And Tom, I believe we were talking about your getting to know the Washington [D.C.] scene as a Congressman in the early [19]60s. Dan, did you have a place you wanted to pick up?

DT: Not really. I thought we—maybe there is something that sticks in your mind in your stint in the U.S. House that you'd like to mention. If not, why then, I'd like to ask you why you were absent so much of the time.

(Laughter)

TG: That's an interesting bit. If you're—what would you call it, an old hill [Capitol Hill] hand, you remember that the only thing that the constituent understands is some kind of account. And I do remember a few of the folks in the House mentioning this, that they'd had election problems because they missed a series of votes here, or number of votes, and then were attacked on it at home. It didn't strike me as being a terribly important thing, of course, which gives you some sense of unreality because there are all kinds of votes. There's maybe one or two votes a month that are very important, you bloody well better be there. And there are hundreds of votes that add up to nothing, 300 to 10, or something of this sort, which is ridiculous. But that, of course, isn't what comes through on the other end of the stick. Somebody adds them all up and says, "Oh, you missed fifty votes." Fifty what? You know. So, in fact, I think I was mentioning in the hallway, the day when Martin Luther King had his great march in Washington [1963], there were about, give or take a few, about a dozen members of Congress who actually were at the march, or at least down where he was making his speech. All the rest of them were back someplace else, and many of them in the halls of Congress. And the Southerners were busy calling for votes on everything to run up the score. And they must have had ten or twenty votes that day on nothing, of course, but they were votes.

CC: I take it, you really had no idea that the electorate was . . .

TG: That dumb?

(Laughter)

CC: You said it.

(Laughter)

CC: But you really didn't feel this was going to be an issue for you, is that right?

TG: Well, it wasn't until brother Hiram [Fong], who had a rather bad record himself, missing important votes, decided to turn it around. But I think this is an interesting phenomena because people, in most of the districts, and I think Hawai'i is no exception, really don't know what's going on on the floor [of Congress] or have a real way to evaluate it. It's too complex.

DT: This was a certain sneaky way of mine in saying that, really you'd gotten settled in the Congress for about two years, and before you knew it, why this opportunity opened up. Fong was running for election, so you decided to seek the Senate post. I think you made a decision even before the national convention of '64, had you not? And therefore your appearance before the national convention was sort of a nice thing to have on the record.

TG: Might be, might not be. The reason is, I think I've mentioned, was that if you run for the House, you have to run every two years which means you're running constantly. Which, quite frankly, in most cases or many cases, means they don't do any work at all except to run for office. And well, it's the way the Constitution's set up, and it's probably had some benefits to it, but it doesn't mean that serious work carried on over a period of time can really be undertaken by lots of folks, particularly those in the House. Senate has a six-year term, makes it easier. That's occurred to a lot of people.

DT: Going into that race, did you feel that you were ahead of the game? You thought you had a really good chance of defeating the incumbent U.S. Senator [Hiram L. Fong] at that time?

TG: Oh, a reasonable chance. But it wasn't, by any means, a runaway of any sort.

DT: In doing so, you sort of had to go up against what sort of later become known as the establishment Democrats. Didn't Nadao Yoshinaga run against you in the primary?

TG: Ah, yeah. And I'm not sure who financed his campaign. It wasn't all sweet bread, I'm sure. And he had a number of expensive ads and he disappeared the day after the primary. So you might, if you were suspicious, suspect that there was some other finger in there.

CC: Who would you suspect the finger was?

TG: Fong.

(Laughter)

DT: Possibly the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union]?

- TG: Oh, yeah, sure, because they were supporting them.
- CC: Let me add, an opportunity just to go back on that because we know, from what you said before and what we know from the record, that the ILWU obviously didn't support you. When you came to town after law school, do you think that your employment with Art [Arthur] Rutledge [head of the Teamsters union] sort of forever cast in time the fact that the ILWU and you wouldn't get along, or do you think it was subsequent to that or, how do you think that worked? I'm just kind of curious that, I mean, if you had ended up working for [Harriet] Bouslog and [Myer C.] Symonds, for instance, you think it would have been different, or wasn't that even possible?
- TG: Oh, I think that was possible and in fact, I think [there] were some interviews to that effect, but perhaps working or representing the Teamsters for a year or so didn't do anything to endear myself to the ILWU, that's for sure. But I don't think that was a basic problem.
- CC: People have somewhat speculated that you have had a record of being critical of some establishment things, and in fact you, yourself, have said that you were viewed as maybe a traitor to your class. One of the few politicians I know that even uses words like class, and yet—and somebody reading that and looking at some of the ILWU at that time, would say, "Well, gee, the ILWU is probably supporting this man." In fact, that was never the case. So maybe you could just clarify why that never was the case.
- TG: Well, I think you have to understand that the ILWU leadership which had various ties and political inclinations or whatever, had one thing which they felt was important, win. And as far as dealing with the politicians are concerned, or anybody in public office, they had one thing which was important, control. Do as we say, or else. And somehow, that never appealed to me too well.
- CC: So basically, [it] was over those kinds of things . . .
- TG: Yeah, if I didn't agree with them, I told them to buzz off. (Chuckles) In fact, we had the same problem in Congress. I think that's where some of it began to come to a head. This must have been when, the year '63 or '64 when Bobby Kennedy started to go after Jimmy [James R.] Hoffa [president of International Brotherhood of Teamsters]. And the Teamsters had this unholy alliance with the ILWU. You think it's different, but that isn't. You see, practicality is getting together with what you get or what you have and trying to make something out of it. The ILWU didn't have any seats on the Mainland except a couple in San Francisco and maybe one in Tacoma someplace. But they had a deal with the Teamsters to support Hoffa. Not widely publicized, of course, but they tried to get speeches made on the floor of the House attacking Bobby Kennedy who was, I guess, AG [Attorney General] at that point, for bringing these indictments and so forth or whatever he was doing. And they handed out the speeches to be made, including some [for] the Hawai'i delegation. This was the ILWU enclave, wasn't it. Well, I told the guy, "Look, I write my own speeches, and as far as that's concerned, I wouldn't give this one anyway. Forget it." And that caused a certain amount of consternation because you were supposed to jump when they whistled, okay?
- CC: But somehow, you were able to say no to other elements of labor which had the same idea sometimes, in terms of wanting politicians to act a certain way, but it didn't end up as hard and fast as the ILWU situation.

TG: No, because in the ILWU, you have this, I don't know what they call it, sort of an ideological line. You're either with us or you're against us, and if you don't do what we say, you're against us. And no flexibility. Well, that's too bad.

CC: Yeah, I just wondered if those things even started when guys starting to represent the ILWU union or something and that even sets in motion these things, you know. I've always been a little curious about that.

TG: Well, I know it was sort of interesting because when they had this flap over Hoffa, I got support from [Arthur] Rutledge who was a Teamster. (Chuckles) Of course, he's an iconoclast, always has been. But it didn't bother him, particularly, but it bothered the ILWU. So why should it bother them that I work with Rutledge? You make sense out of it.

DT: Okay.

(Laughter)

CC: Well, maybe that's why he says we'll never make sense out of it. But I had to ask. I'm sorry to interrupt, Dan, but maybe you could move us forward. I just had to ask.

DT: Sort of bringing that to a head, if you had just run for your seat in the Congress, the ILWU would probably have opposed you for that, even.

TG: I don't know whether that's true or not. It depends whether you were a shoo-in or not. If you're a shoo-in, they would endorse you. I even got endorsed in Mānoa by them once.

DT: You did? I didn't know that you ever received an endorsement for this.

TG: Yeah, sure. There must have been at least twenty votes at the . . .

DT: Oh, as territorial representative?

TG: Yeah.

DT: Yeah.

(Laughter)

CC: It wasn't exactly ILWU territory.

TG: No, no. That's why. They went down and endorsed the whole list. This is what you do to get what you call a batting average. You pick the possible winners and so forth, and try to balance them out and we can't do anything about it. When you get through, you add up—see all the people we endorsed that won, therefore, we must be influential. Still around today.

DT: At any rate, you ran into quite a buzz saw with Hiram Fong, and he spent quite a bit a money in that campaign [1964], didn't he, as I recall?

TG: Well, I remember looking at his report that was submitted to Congress. This was before the

reporting [of campaign contributions and expenditures] acts were tightened up. I think he had his filing fee listed, and that was all. But if we counted up the media ads, it probably came close to a million [dollars], somewhere around there.

DT: Which is far in excess of the resources you had.

TG: Oh, I think we hit, oh, I forget, maybe seventy, eighty thousand [dollars].

DT: Anything else about that campaign that sticks in your mind?

TG: Well, I think the indications were very clear. You might have suspected that this would occur and I should have, I suppose. The so-called Democratic establishment, again we're talking about the Burns group, didn't come out and openly endorse Fong, but they didn't do anything against him that I could find, and their lack of support was obvious in most quarters, as far as I was concerned. So what they were really saying is, Fong's better.

DT: Now, they didn't help you, you're saying, as much as perhaps you had helped them in '62.

TG: Well, I think that's a fair analysis, yeah.

DT: Back when they had a sort of unified ticket. When Heen forces and others sort of joined with Jack to cement his election in '64, in '62.

TG: That's the difference between wanting to get in and being in, you see.

DT: Well, you'd lost in any event, and not by much, but enough so that Hiram Fong returned to the Senate, and that left you with no office and nothing, presently, to do. Or if you would have believed the Burns forces, they gave you a nice job, hoping that you'd come around to their point of view. They made you, what was it? Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity [in 1964]?

TG: They already made somebody else that director [Lt. Governor William Richardson, who held the job part-time] and the program wasn't going anyplace, or at least they hadn't really gotten started, I think. I don't know what their motives might have been, but I did get a call saying, "Could you give us a hand here?" And I thought it was sort of interesting since I'd worked on the [anti-poverty] bill in the first place. And so I took it over for a year and a half, and I think we got most of the basic programs underway. And it was fairly easy because, at that stage, there was money. In fact (chuckles) in Washington, they were running around throwing gobs of dollars at any program that looked like it could make sense, so you could fund them very easily. Later it became more difficult.

DT: Did your relationship with Burns improve during that period or . . .

TG: No, I don't think so. I [was] looked on as a threat this way, being in existence, I suppose.

DT: So you stayed in that office for what, about a year, year and a half?

TG: Something like that, yeah.

DT: And then what next? What came next, do you remember?

TG: Well, I guess I had another election coming up in '66.

(Laughter)

DT: Well, you announced [for lieutenant governor] and apparently the governor didn't like the idea too much. Was that the message you got?

TG: Oh, very clearly. That was obviously the situation because, at that point, they had solidified at least their base and didn't want anybody else who might rock the boat; so therefore, they had to have someone else. And many of the people that were connected with the Burns administration, some of whom were, I consider, good friends, were very clear saying, "Don't, don't, don't." Well, that's a good way to get somebody to go, I suppose. (DT chuckles.)

CC: Did the fact that he [Burns] picked Ken [Kenneth F.] Brown [as his running mate] seem to surprise some of even his friends as far as you could tell? I mean, what was going on there?

TG: (Chuckles) Well, I don't know what was going on because I wasn't party to the decision but, and I think it should be said that Ken is, was, and still will be a very decent sort of a fellow, not terribly political.

CC: He wasn't really thought of as a Democrat, but . . .

TG: No, I think he was more of a Republican, or had been sort of connected in that era. But a very decent fellow, and very compliant, I guess, with whatever Mr. Burns wanted, so he was anointed.

DT: This was often referred to as a golf course union, would that stand the light of day?

TG: I guess they both played a lot of golf, yeah. I don't know . . .

DT: The fact that they were partners, played a lot of golf together and. . .

TG: Yeah, it's an old island family, been around a long time. As far as I know, most of the Browns have been Republicans. Part of the establishment, so to speak, prior to '55.

DT: This would tie in with the Burns approach to—maybe bring himself closer to the establishment and also maybe to balance the ticket. Do you suppose that . . .

TG: Well, I think that had already taken place. In effect the so-called Republican establishment and the Burns Democrats had gone together in '59.

DT: Do you think they went together in '59?

TG: Oh sure, they had a meeting of it. I mean the ILWU was the glue.

DT: This was even earlier then, and after he became governor?



TG: Oh, sure.

DT: Of course, didn't mean too much, as long as he wasn't governor, did it? But it took on new meaning when he . . .

TG: Once you become governor then you have the authority and the duty, I guess, to do certain things, and they're involved and they have to become very closely attached to the process, and they were already there.

DT: As a political tactic, how would you label it, effective or ineffective?

TG: Oh, it's very effective. You, in effect, if that's the right word, eliminate the opposition. There hasn't been a Republican party since, when, 1962, really. Well, there's some people around, they call themselves Republicans and occasionally, a Democrat will transfer over and vice versa, but the . . .

DT: They're still trying, put it that way.

(Laughter)

TG: They're now going into a convention and elect [Pat] Robertson delegates who will never have a vote in the [national] convention. I mean, this is ridiculous, the whole thing is sort of a farce.

DT: Well, then you had problems as you moved into that [1966 primary election] campaign. You didn't get out, obviously, Kenny Brown stayed in. So two of you went head to head, and as I recall, Jack Burns was not very happy with the ultimate result of that primary. You won and Kenny Brown had to stay home. That posed problems for you from the very outset, didn't it? Maybe more of a problem for him [Burns] than for you, I don't know.

TG: Oh, I suppose it's a problem for both, but basically, it doesn't make any difference to the governor because he runs the place and anybody else, particularly the lieutenant governor, has nothing to say about anything except license plates and voting systems.

CC: But in terms of the general election, it seemed that your victory sort of immobilized the governor's own campaign efforts. I mean, there seemed to be—the other guys got pretty close, right?

TG: Yeah, the so-called Burns machine, sort of sputtered to a—not to a stop, but to a very slow speed at a certain stage. After they got badly dumped in the lieutenant governor race, which was quite a margin there, I don't think they knew what to do. Jack took off to, what was that, Botswana or some such place in Africa, the antipode of Hawai'i.

DT: That's quite a story in itself. We'll pick that up as soon as we've changed tapes.

(Laughter)

CC: That's true, he went to Africa. [Burns went to Botswana as President Lyndon B. Johnson's personal representative to that country's independence celebrations.]

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is videotape number seven of the Tom Gill interview that took place on May 11, 1988.

DT: I think we're right at the position where the governor had gone to Zimbabwe [Botswana] . . .

TG: Is that where it was?

DT: I hope it was, maybe something else, but it's the antipode of Hawai'i. It's halfway around the world, and he got word down there, I guess, the fact that you've been nominated and here you were tied together. What happened thereafter? You had to wait quite a while before you got together with the governor, didn't you?

TG: Well, he wasn't in town, and as soon as he did get back, we had discussions. They were pleasant enough, no problem, but I don't recall any great enthusiasm and, in fact, he seemed sort of down around the mouth about the whole political spectrum. As a result, the Republican candidates [Randolph Crossley and Dr. George Mills] picked up a certain amount of steam that they wouldn't have had otherwise. That probably made the race somewhat closer than needed to be.

DT: Didn't they make quite a factor out of—in the campaign and showed—somehow got a hold of film of the governor getting off the airplane and literally snubbing you when he returned?

TG: I remember his legions were very protective. I don't remember that he personally did any snubbing, but as I think Mr. [Ronald] Reagan's presidency might even indicate, sometimes you have people in the camp who think they run everything, and they sometimes make more mistakes than they're entitled to.

DT: At any rate, there weren't any pictures, were there, of you two standing together and waving to the crowds and accepting your accolades as running mates?

TG: Not at the airport, there were a few later.

DT: That's what I was referring to. Later, it did get a little bit better didn't it?

TG: Oh, yeah. We had to work on it and try to pull things together the best you can. But there wasn't much time. I think it was only about a month, I guess, between the primary and general in those days.

DT: Right, right. But you were able to pull it together, and did eke out a victory. It wasn't a massive victory, but substantial. Things improve or get worse?

TG: Well, there was no particular improvement because they weren't very good to start with. (DT chuckles.) Or actually it didn't get worse because they probably couldn't have. But no, I think the initial response or one of the first things I discovered was a gentleman who was working for the governor who's [a] very nice fellow and very responsible type, came over and said, "Look. I think I can do better and you can do better if you'll just come out and make a public commitment you'll never run for governor."

And I told him, "What?" And this was four years from the next election, "What are you talking about?"

Well, he says, "That's the way it is." Now he wasn't part of the hard core, but he was being told, I guess, what the score was.

I told him, "No, I can't do that. But anything we can do to help or work, well, let me know."

I think pretty much, the palace guard, if that's the right word, closed in, locked elbows, and in fact, it became rather difficult even to find out when Jack Burns was out of town. You read about it occasionally in the paper about the time he came back.

CC: Even though you, technically, would be acting governor while he was gone?

TG: That's the reason for it.

CC: But you didn't know that he was gone.

TG: Right. Well, not that we were over there inquiring. None of my business, but.

DT: But you were in fairly close proximity in those days, just across the hallway from one another in the palace ['Iolani Palace], right?

TG: It's a gap of several hundred miles, yes.

(Laughter)

CC: In that case it was.

DT: But in spite of that type of situation which existed between the office of lieutenant governor and the governor, you turned your attention to the election process and, I think, probably have some reason to want to speak with some degree of pride about some of the things you were able to accomplish there.

TG: Well, I think one of the things that's been perfectly clear for years since most of us had worked very closely with elections going back into the [19]50s: We had a traditional, but inefficient system which was make marks on a piece of paper. We lost a lot of ballots because people made a check instead of an X or they missed the box and all this sort of thing. And the counting process was gruesome. Some precincts stayed way into the morning just trying to count the X's. In fact, we had a couple of precincts that I got a little suspicious about. They counted more X's than there were or less than there were, or something of the sort. It was just [a] very spooky way to do it.

We did have some people that came in and made a suggestion about—this was in the early days of computers—a computer counter device which basically was punching holes which were then counted by a machine. We also had some others that wanted to sell voting machines, the kind that you pull the crank on, like they have in Jersey City and a few places. Frankly, I got a good look at the salesman and figured that I didn't want his product, so I told

him to get out. But the other system was brand-new and tried in very many places, so we gave it a try and it worked reasonably well. There were some technological problems that should you push the *puka*, then the flap wouldn't go, and then you'd have a problem with the vote. That's now been solved by better technology, but it does allow you, if that's good or bad, to get accurate results very quickly which is really what you want. You want accurate results and you don't want a lot of fiddling (with) the ballots.

DT: So you were really able to establish just within this four-year period, a really new, totally new system of voting which lasts until the present day, at any rate.

TG: Oh yeah. It was new. But it worked, so perhaps it was a good idea.

CC: But other than the statutory role in terms of the lieutenant governor and elections, you have indicated, at least a little bit so far, your view of what you could accomplish as lieutenant governor. Seems to be a somewhat limited view of that office. Is that . . .

TG: Well, it's a limited position. In fact, there's some rather obscene ways to describe it, but we wouldn't do that here, of course. No, one other thing, I think, is that we got new license plates for everybody. It was great. The license plates were getting old, so we got some that shone in the dark, a great technological advance, and got them in place. Big deal.

And there were a few other things. I think being interested in planning and some of these things including attempts to implement the land use law which some of us had put through earlier in the legislature. Led me to take an interest in a few places which got properly zoned, including Kealahou Bay on the Big Island [where] they had a Ramada Inn planned for the cliff. Got that one turned around and at least they don't have a Ramada Inn on the cliff at this point. They have a lot of tourist boats in the harbor, but it's now a public preserve, and probably one of the better scenic spots on that part of the island. And a number of other things similar to that.

DT: You've basically had to interject yourself into some of those things because of the climate that existed with the Burns camp . . .

TG: Well, many weren't . . .

DT: You weren't invited in to . . .

TG: Oh no. No. Well, it's no real problem because they weren't particularly interested in [it] themselves so, if you just went in and did it, why, they weren't going to complain. So, sort of filling a vacuum.

DT: You got a little bit restive, I gather, or maybe you had other reasons for it, at any rate, you decided, after a passage of four years, that you would indeed run for governor. I think you made this decision fairly early, about a year or so, well in advance of the election of 1970.

TG: Well, you have to do something, and it's either get out or go. And I made it clear to a number of people, including Jack [Burns], that I thought that he was certainly entitled to two terms. In fact, I was encouraged to try to run against him in '66, but that didn't seem right. So, I didn't. But after two terms, then what? Of course, that's when the panic set in, and the

palace guard became highly agitated. And they made so many mistakes in 1966 that, I guess, they had a real checklist of what not to do so they became more efficient, and in '70, they pulled it off.

DT: Do you think Burns would have retired if you had not decided to [run for governor in 1970]. . . ?

TG: I don't know. Might have. Well, I don't recall any strong inclination that way because they needed somebody to hang on to that—and who would they get?

DT: 'Cause there is one story around, that Burns decided to run [again] once he saw that you might run.

TG: Well, there maybe is something to that, I really don't know. It's a matter of protecting the homestead, I suppose.

DT: At any rate, you had one major obstacle in that race, did you not? Once they were alerted to the extent of your popularity. What I'm referring to is, so I don't speak in circles here is, this was probably the first big money campaign in Hawaiian history.

TG: Well, I think it . . .

DT: The famous, now, "Catch a Wave" campaign as I recall.

TG: Yeah. I don't know that it was a beginning. I think Hiram Fong who had his own money was able to . . .

CC: You could say that, sure.

TG: . . . get it started. But I think you're right as far as the gubernatorial race. This was the first one where they really poured the money in, and hired all these flacks and professional image makers and protected the candidate so he wouldn't say anything wrong at the wrong time, and you know, all these dances that we go through today. And it was quite an era, isn't it? It's given us [Ronald] Reagan, to some people's dismay. In fact, I think it's hard to evaluate these things because TV has become such an icon and part of everybody's brain, which is unfortunate perhaps, that they no longer can analyze, or a great many people just don't think about what's going on. They don't read anything, they don't understand the basic problems sometimes. It's so easy just to watch the flicker picture and be hypnotized. And that's exactly what Reagan is. Now, does that mean that the electorate is dumb? Well, you can answer that yourself. This means they don't understand. They can be had easily with enough money.

CC: And certainly the race in 1970 was, at least it's never gone back any other way from then on. I mean, since that "Catch a Wave" kind of approach Hawai'i politics changed, would you say?

TG: Oh yeah. I think it became a very, very much different arena. Of course, several other things had happened, too, which you have to understand, and that is the voting blocs solidified, became well defined, mostly or a large part through civil service and the government employment. So all you have to do is to reach over, punch a button and that department takes

off and does something, or people in that department. So you have a built-in machine, if that's the right word. And then you lay on top of that, the media stuff to take care of the floating-type votes who don't really know what they're supposed to do, or sometimes don't. Add the two together, and you got a win. That's not too hard. So, working from that base with money is probably fairly easy. And once you have that base, once you have the things like the [state] department of accounting and general services where the [government] contracts are given out, and so forth. It's kind of hard to fight off the money that comes in, so I have been told. I never had the experience, but I understand that that's the case.

DT: In any event—go ahead.

CC: No, no. Go ahead.

DT: Well, you ended up losing, but it was a close race, wasn't it?

TG: Fairly close, yeah [13,000 votes].

DT: Anything that you would second-guess about yourself in that campaign? Do you reflect upon it?

TG: Oh sure. You could do lots of things better, but I think with the resources we had, and with the lineup on the other side, it probably was not all that bad. But of course, there's no such thing as second best in an election. You either win or you lose, and in that case, it was a clear loss, and that was it.

DT: And the resources were, the lack of resources I should say, would you list that as probably your number one drawback then in that campaign?

TG: Oh, that plus sort of an arrogance about public flackery. I don't know, some of that problem. I consider it sort of an insult to people to try to lead 'em around by the nose with some kind of dumb ad. So, you know, we didn't like that sort of thing, and so obviously, we didn't do much of it. Even if we'd had the money, I don't think we'd have done very well. And to bring in a guy from the Mainland [Jack Seigle] to run a movie, good part of which is fabrication, full of goody-goody statements and all of this junk, which is what they did, strikes me [as] being slightly intellectually dishonest.

DT: You toyed with the idea, though, for a little while, and I guess, rejected it again when you ran again in '74, didn't you?

TG: Oh, yeah. In '74, we had to do something that was somewhat more advanced than the stone-age systems we'd been using. And yeah, we got a hold of Charlie Guggenheim from Washington who was a very interesting fellow. Got to know him pretty well. He's not the traditional flack, as far as I can tell, no offense intended to present company, of course, but.

CC: I don't know if there are any flacks in the room.

(Laughter)

TG: No, Charlie was a very thoughtful guy and did really highly intellectual-type work. He's a

documentary specialist, I think, in many respects. And he did some good work for us, but of course, we didn't have enough money to really get him off the ground.

CC: Was it your theory that the changeover from Burns to [George] Ariyoshi made a weakness there, and that you might be able to. . . . That might make the difference in terms of the so-called, machine?

TG: Well, possibly. Except to that point the machine was all wired, geared and wheeled up. Not to denigrate George particularly, but I think most of us who worked with him in the legislature back in the [19]50s are not overpowered by his intellect. In fact, he was a very nervous Democrat. I can remember him fidgeting himself almost off his chair in one vote they had on the minimum wage. I couldn't understand what was bothering him. He didn't want to do it, but had to do it, but he didn't want to do it, but he had to do it, and so on, and so on, and so on. And other things of the sort. George is basically sort of a Republican with a Democratic label, but that fit the pattern very well at that point. No make no waves, go along, get along. And have somebody out in front so the troops can charge, and that's really his role and he played it very well. Left the state in a disaster situation, of course, but that's neither here nor there. (Chuckles)

DT: We haven't mentioned, in one of these races, at least, as I recall, Frank Fasi was a factor, too, to be . . .

TG: Oh yeah, old Frank.

DT: . . . to be determined.

TG: He never changes. Yeah, he pops in and out, and he popped into the '74 [Democratic primary] race [for governor]. And I think, had a reasonable effect there. He split the non-machine vote very efficiently and allowed Ariyoshi to escape through on a couple of percentage points.

DT: Wasn't there any basis for the two of you to get together? Surely, you've been through a lot this time, and was it attempted, and if so, what happened to it? It obviously didn't work, but . . .

TG: Which two are you talking about?

DT: I'm talking about you and Frank getting together because, at least, you both were non-machine, as you phrased it, non-organizational candidates . . .

TG: Well, thinking back as far as I can, I never recall anybody ever getting together with Frank. That's sort of impossible, and I think it's still true.

DT: But you did have a tie-up with Nelson Doi, right, for a while? It looked like he was going to . . .

TG: Yes I have.

DT: . . . he was going to run as lieutenant governor [in 1974] . . .



TG: I knew Nelson in the legislature. He was a very competent fellow.

DT: He was a very what?

TG: Competent fellow.

DT: Competent fellow.

TG: Had some good ideas.

DT: I almost misunderstood you there. (Laughs) But somewhere or another, he got off, he wanted out of the tie-up, didn't he?

TG: I don't know really what his problem was. I have some suspicions, but it isn't fair to speculate on. But that's true, he jumped ship, and ran off by himself.

DT: Yeah, maybe we can talk a little bit more about that as soon as we change tapes.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is a continuation of the Tom Gill interview. It's videotape number eight and this is that last tape.

DT: Well, we were talking about the fact that Nelson Doi split off from your informal ticket, shall we say, for your '74 governor's race, and we've never been able to quite figure out what the motivating factor was in any firm sense, I gather?

TG: Well, I think Nelson had his own desires, he wanted to do certain things by himself, I guess, and didn't feel that he wanted to be a second wheel or whatever, which is what a lieutenant governor candidate and office is, and so he did his thing. But he had, of course, very good support across the state and he won the race for lieutenant governor, whereupon he went into the cold storage, I gather. And later on [1976], they talked him into trying to run for mayor which he got clobbered, and then he disappeared back to the Big Island.

DT: Now, when you say mayor, I think it should be clarified, this was mayor of Honolulu, too, in spite of the fact that he's a Big Island person.

TG: Sure.

DT: And this didn't work at all, did it?

TG: Well, there was no way he was going [to] do that. He's walking around in the area where, in spite of the fact there weren't enough of them, there were plenty of our supporters around who were a little annoyed at him, and they weren't going to help him, and he knew this. But he was being used as sort of a stalking-horse by the administration and he got stalked, that's all.

DT: But in terms of his desertion of your ticket, you don't figure that this was an Ariyoshi doing, because Ariyoshi, probably didn't particularly welcome another AJA [American of Japanese

Ancestry] on the ticket with him, no one there to balance . . .

TG: No, I think it was sort of an independent thing by Nelson.

DT: You think it was more independent by Nelson, huh.

TG: Yeah.

DT: You have anything else in this campaign that you would like to ask about, Chris?

CC: No, I think that's about it. I think we'll probably always be a little curious as to candidate Doi's . . .

(Laughter)

CC: . . . reasons, but that's the, obviously, one of the major issues of that campaign.

TG: Yeah, well, the most affecting acts, I think, yeah.

DT: Yeah.

CC: Not on issues, but that's what I mean. I mean, one of the things that happened during that campaign that had an impact on what the result was going to be.

DT: Yeah, he had a fair measure of his popularity and it may have been something to it that he thought that he could win on his own. And then, as you say, he thought that this would give him a bigger stake in the future than the ordinary lieutenant governor candidate, but . . .

TG: Well, I think it would have under certain circumstances, but Nelson had the problem, I think, of never having been a core member of the machine, so to speak. He was a fairly independent fellow in many respects. Certainly thought well for himself and he has a good head. So he wouldn't fit into this march, stomp, march, stomp type of approach that has prevailed for so many years in the state government.

DT: Did you then decide to simply call it a day in politics and return to the practice of law and put your kids through college? Was that a conscious decision on your part?

TG: Well, there isn't a hell of a lot else [you're] going to do, and I think if you know anything at all about political history, you plan the time [to] just blow the whistle and that's it. (If) you can't be effective or useful, why have a disease that says you have to run every two years? It's ridiculous. (There are) lots of other things to do, and some of them are quite interesting.

DT: At any rate, you were quiet for quite a period, but then resurfaced, so far as the political world is concerned, a little bit, at any rate, at least you pulled the cover back just a slight bit in, let's see, in 1986, did you not?

TG: Well, there was certainly an attempt to get an idea about what was going on. At that point, I think, the political makeup of the electorate, plus some cracks that appeared in the machine, they're getting old and retiring, and new people were coming in that didn't have all the same

motivations. And the times had changed and they were, I think, very tired of Ariyoshi. It's hard to tell how you get tired of George, because you can't tell what he's doing anyway. But, the net result is that a lot of people were trying to do things. There were some new movement in the Democratic party, and if I recall correctly, I had a kid [Gary Gill] who was surfacing there someplace, and so we tried to pull as many of the old crew together as we could and see what they were interested in doing. Many of them were interested, but there wasn't that much interest in yours truly, of course. In fact, nobody knew the name, so it was fine.

DT: How did you ascertain that? Did you use any scientific way of ascertaining that or was it just osmosis, a general feel for politics or what?

TG: Oh, a little bit of both. We ran a couple of polls and checked, and the name recognition was very low except among the old faithful. And you started looking at the electorate, see that a very high percentage of them were in grade school when you ran before, and they wouldn't have—well, some of them did, depending on their parents—but (most had) no particular feel for the situation.

DT: You also would have faced a three-man race again [for governor], right?

TG: It had that appearance, yes, at least.

DT: So you decided against it?

TG: Well, it was nothing there. There was no point in it, and talked to a lot of the folks that had been around for years, and it was my conclusion. If that's the shot, call it.

DT: You felt comfortable with it?

TG: Sure.

CC: Now, I don't know whether you were aware of this or not, but I believe when we talked to Bob Oshiro, he credits you with getting him involved in the Democratic party. Do you recall anything like that?

TG: Oh, there may have been some connection there. He was a precinct worker out in Waipahu—I mean in Wahiawā; and in the early [19]50s, we had people out there setting up precinct organizations. As I recall, he became quite active in some of it, whether it was his own doing or somebody else's, I'm not sure. And he was a very competent political mechanic, if that's the right word.

CC: I guess that's what I'm getting for. He then went on to become, at least, credited by some as having engineered some of the victories against you. Do you feel that that's accurate in terms of his role?

TG: Oh, I'm sure that he had something to do with it, but I think it's kind of interesting to see how a competent mechanic can become a famous guru, which seems to be his role at the present time. And Bob's a nice fellow. He has a good head. I think he fit right in with the machine, though, and that's why he was effective, and he got a little scalded a few years ago, I think, when [he] came out and endorsed something that American Factors wanted in the

Leeward area which surprised some people, but I didn't see any great reason to be surprised because that was part of the mechanism. He just came out publicly and sort of endorsed what used to be considered the enemy, the Big Five, or a member of the Big Five. He was some kind of a public representative for something they wanted. It didn't, apparently, work out too well.

CC: No, I've just been curious 'cause he—when we talked to him, he did say that Tom Gill was one of the reasons he joined the Democratic party, and then later on, he worked like hell to make sure you didn't win some elections.

TG: There were a number of examples. Such is politics. (Chuckles)

CC: Dan?

DT: You're credited with doing a great deal to build up the Democratic party in Hawai'i. Is that something of which you're reasonably proud, at least up to a point?

TG: Well, I think the party dissolved somewhere in the early [19]60s. Has never really come back. But there was an attempt with reasonable success, I think, in late [19]50s, to put together something which was more than just a series of personality politicians, which had been the rule, of course, prior to that time. And all of these things involved having programs, having ideas about what should be done, and trying to figure out answers, if there are any answers, and to sell that as a package so the people would vote for the idea, and not just for individual faces. I think, to some extent, many things including TV, destroyed that. It's impossible to sell an idea on TV. I'm being a little gross here, but I think it's basically true. People just sort of flicker, and they don't stop and think. And the guy with the smiling face, somehow comes through, the idea gets lost. How else do you explain [Ronald] Reagan? No ideas at all, and yet he flickers well.

DT: You're talking about Reagan or [Donald] Regan?

TG: Reagan.

DT: Yeah. (Chuckles)

TG: Reagan. President Reagan. I can't keep them straight somehow.

DT: Yeah. Be careful. (Chuckles)

TG: I guess now there is a difference.

DT: I think you're making a reference to Reagan, the president, in other words?

TG: Yeah, I think there's a great schism in the White House. I think both Ronnie and Nancy are now going to have separate astrologers, but we'll see what happens. (DT chuckles.) See what happens. (DT chuckles.)

CC: The jokes of the day are (TG chuckles) jokes about the astrology in the White House.

TG: The original Star Wars. (Chuckles)

DT: Do you have any particular reaction thus far to the current Governor [John] Waihee, who is apparently the heir apparent of the Burns organization of yesteryear?

TG: I don't know if he's heir apparent, but he's very adept at taking over the mechanism pretty well. I don't think he has all of the core. I don't know all that much about it, frankly, it's not fair to comment on something of that sort. But he filled the shoes, so to speak, very well, and I think John's a very adept fellow. He is much more acute in dealing with people than his predecessor by a long shot. And he has some good ideas. We'll see what happens, of course.

DT: It's a little too early to tell, then, in your judgment?

TG: First year, who can tell? It is sort of ironic, I suppose, to watch him come out now, as everybody else is, and talk about housing.

(Laughter)

TG: Every twenty years, it surfaces. It's there all the time and the whole thing has been a farce. I hope he has some success with it. It's long overdue.

DT: You also made oblique reference, and I'm not sure that any viewer, or just a casual viewer of this would know what you were referring to. I think you were referring to your son's [Gary Gill] entry in one stage into politics. At least one of your children is actively engaged in politics, a member, current member of the [Honolulu] City Council.

TG: Yeah, he surfaced out of nowhere.

DT: (Laughs) Now, you must have had some influence around the house, somewhere along the line.

TG: No, he's much smarter. He doesn't get people mad at him. Yet.

DT: He seems to smile a little bit more than you did, on the campaign trail, at any rate. I am not personally acquainted with him.

TG: No, I think he's not exactly bred in the bone, but he was very active and campaigned as long as he was alive, so to speak. In fact in '74, he was running many of the field crews. These are kids out of high school who were going out and beating on doors all over the island. And they worked pretty hard. Did good work. But they also, I think, understood a little bit about what they were doing, and this sort of thing lives with them for a while, and I think Gary understands pretty well what he's trying to do. He's probably getting frustrated with the inability to make it happen, which is a normal position in any legislative body.

DT: So for that reason and others, you're going to remain interested in Hawaiian politics as long as you're around, right? Or are you?

TG: Oh, might as well be interested.

(Laughter)

TG: Where else do you have a running comedy? (Chuckles)

CC: Well, actually I want to ask you about that because you have a sense of humor about it all, and sometimes, maybe, that's not always been an asset.

TG: Not very good, no. What is funny to one or two people is hideous to a number of others, so you should never make a joke. You have to be very serious, and pompous, and say platitudes in a slightly different way, and so forth. Never come right out and say it because quite often, that hurts somebody's feelings. And well, there's a rule, I guess. I'm not sure who formulated it, but let's say you have ten issues or ten things you do, and then each one of them, nine out of ten people agree with you, but one out of ten doesn't. By the time you get to the tenth issue, you're dead because they remember what they don't like, they do not remember what they do like. This was oversimplification, obviously, but to be against, to know that guy's bad, he did something, wow, it sticks in the mind. If you do something they agree with, well, of course, you supposed to do that, right? It doesn't have the same impact on the voter's memory. And that's why, most of these guys are dancing in circles all the time. They never really want to come to roost anyplace because if they did, somebody would say that's wrong, and they'll remember.

DT: Well, Adlai Stevenson tried his own particular brand of humor, he didn't even get to the White House, I guess.

(Laughter)

DT: So, I won't say that you have the same brand of humor than Adlai Stevenson or vice versa, but it's interesting, your comments about . . .

TG: Well, I thought Adlai had a good touch, but, of course, poor guy was running against an icon, so to speak, [Dwight] Eisenhower. I remember his getting off—where was it? Oh, was at the [19]60 convention, I guess, when he got off the plane at the Los Angeles airport someplace. It was a hot day, and he got up and staggered up on top of this thing and smiled at everybody and wipes his brow. Of course, he had no hair, so to speak. And then looks around and says, "Well, eggheads of the world unite." Everybody busted out laughing, but it wasn't the kind of thing that gets you elected, you know. (Laughs)

DT: I think the rest of that went, "You have nothing to lose but your yolks," right?

TG: Yeah, that's it.

(Laughter)

TG: Terrible, terrible.

(Laughter)

DT: Well, becoming serious for just one moment before we conclude this, you've always been interested in substantive politics as opposed to, what one might say, more superficial aspects

of it. I'm not trying to put you in the role of prophet or anything of that sort, but what do you foresee for the future in Hawaiian politics, and what are your—are you fearful or optimistic, pessimistic? How would you characterize it?

TG: It's very easy to be pessimistic, and you have to be slightly psychotic to be optimistic, but let's try. I think basically, Hawai'i has many advantages which other parts of the country don't have. Just how to explain it is difficult. We've been able—willingly, unwillingly, or consciously or unconsciously—to create a society or at least live in a society where nobody is a majority, ethnically speaking. It's much more homogenous now, I guess, than it was thirty, forty, fifty years ago, in the sense that the third, fourth, fifth generations tend to meld a bit, but not always. We've been successful in this regard, and I think that's a plus. I think we still have an awful lot of people who think in terms of public interest in the sense of what's good for more people than you do in many places.

The (disserving) side, of course, is the so-called one-issue politics which began to surface toward the end of the [19]60s. (You have) no interest in anything but that (one issue), whatever it is. And it could be good, bad, indifferent, whatever, but only one issue. And that, I think, destroys a good part of the political mechanism, because every (politician), then, does what I was telling you. "Don't get that guy mad at me, even though I do everything else right, he's going to be mad because I don't like (the one thing) he likes." So everybody mashes it. And it means that the political mechanism, then, is unable to compromise and pull together a solution. They tend to polarize, and then dash behind the door and make a decision, and come back out again. But I think, by and large, we probably have more general accommodation for trying to do the right thing, whatever that may be. The political mechanism now, though, isn't terribly effective and it may get better. I think there's some more interest in making it better.

DT: We're almost out of tape, but you think the single-member district legislature will help in the future or impede in the future?

TG: No, I think it's a farce. Well, not a farce, but I think you're more effective if you have multimember districts. Not tremendous numbers, but enough so that a guy can run second and still get elected.

DT: Okay, thank you very much. Do you have anything, Chris?

CC: No, that's it. Thank you.

DT: Appreciate your time.

JC: And that's the end of the Tom Gill interview.

END OF INTERVIEW



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